UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

PERSONAL MEANINGS OF PEACEFULNESS

by

GLORIA STARKO ©

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DEDICATION

To My Family and To My Friends.
Yes, all of you.
You know who you are.

You are the amazing ones who have used peaceful persuasion
and now can join with me in the jubilant cry,

Peace at last!

GJS

ABSTRACT

In this human science inquiry, lived experiences of peacefulness are explored through stories of peaceful moments, objects as symbols of peace and individual and group interviews. In addressing the question, what is the meaning of peacefulness, this study employs a combination of interpretive methods derived from phenomenology, hermeneutics and narrative inquiry. Six themes which represent a certain invariance of meaning are discussed: Rhythm of Accord, Promise in Peace, Inner Rejuvenation, Sweet Surrender in Peace, Kinship in Peace and Window to Eternity. Together they comprise a provisional collective meaning that seems to describe the human experience of peacefulness.

Three additional more variant dimensions of the phenomenon are explored for enhancement of meanings: The Sensual Dimension of Peace, The Illusive Dimension of Peace, and the Practical Dimension of Peace. Therapeutic applications of the themes of peacefulness and specific peacework strategies are discussed. The findings of this study provide a framework for living peacefully and for promotion of peace in the lives of others.

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CHAPTER ONE

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE EXPERIENCE OF PEACEFULNESS

A Question of Peacefulness

This is an inquiry into the phenomenon of peacefulness. In seeking to understand how moments of peace are meaningfully experienced, peaceful moment stories and other symbolic representations of the personal peace experience are being explored. A hetererogenous group of men, women and a few children contribute to a rich gathering of peace*filled* experiences. In seeking depth of meaning, this study employs a combination of human science methods. Phenomenology, hermeneutics and narrative inquiry guide the interpretive process which is centered about the question, "What is the meaning of peacefulness in lived experience"?

My interest in studying the phenomenon of personal peace began with a statement that a friend made to me four years ago when I first began doctoral studies.

> You are like a butterfly. You fly here and there and this way and that and every so often you light and stop and catch your breath just to begin fluttering about again.

The words seemed true not only for myself but for my peers as they raced about, trying to meet school, work or familial deadlines. We shared our frantic stories. I also felt the chaos and the pain of clients in the counselling room where I practice as a psychologist. It seemed that I was very acquainted with the butterfly's travels but less with the silenced wings and I wondered what was experienced during the flight's interlude. What is *there* when the pain stops? What is the experience when discord melts into harmony and the world takes on a softer hue?

In this study it is the personal realm of peace that is the focus of attention. The concept of peace encompasses interpersonal peace and global peace. Unlike a woman named Peace Pilgrim, who wandered the world with her peaceful messages, my current goal is not to investigate the whole peace picture. A complete look would encompass peace among nations, groups, individuals and what Peace Pilgrim emphasized as "very, very important inner peace" (Peace Pilgrim, 1994, p. 7). This study emphasizes the primacy of personal peace and attempts to reveal those aspects of personal peace that distinguish it from other human experiences, no matter how tentative or provisional such distinctions may be.

Personal Reflections on Peacefulness

I do not enter the research void of a personal reaction to the words 'personal peace', or without beliefs related to meaning or significance of the experience. It is from my personhood that the seeds of this research were planted. There are many experiences which, retrospectively, I might refer to as times of peacefulness, when I was *at peace* whether momentarily or in a more lasting way. I could also say that I experienced *personal or inner peace,* or that I was *feeling peaceful* at those times. Would others use this terminology to describe the heart of the peace experience? The language of peace itself may hold clues to the experience and will be explored in chapter two of this document.

In exploring peace I begin with an image of a peaceful person derived from my own experience of the phenomenon. I understand that *my* image, which is open to transformation, is but a possible experience of *ours*.

> I have an image of the person that I would like to become.
> A serene figure that graciously touches the life around her walks gently before my mind's eye. I can feel the calmness within that comes from a kind of knowing. The figure has not been

sheltered from a fast pace or hidden away from trouble. This serene entity knows of these things. Her presence is profound as I write of her. At once I can feel the cool grass beneath her feet and hear the rustle of her long blue skirt as it caresses the ground of her experience. There is an expression of peaceful resolve on her face. "It's okay," she whispers. "It's okay."

The voice of serenity invites me on a journey towards personal peace. Though I have experienced peace*lessness*, I understand, from my own experience, that a return to peace is part of the big picture. Deep within my soul rest many stories of peaceful moments. If my peace lies within, it is there that I must seek it. If it is the voice of peace that I wish to hear then I must get closer to its faint murmurings.

My wish for peaceful existence does not stand alone. For myself, personal peace encompasses a need to love and be loved, to know I have a rightful place in this world, to walk with hope and gratitude, to recognize my uniqueness, to hold life close to my heart lest it disappear one day without my having lived. Perhaps being at peace means all these things but I don't really know. I have never really said, "Aha, now I am at peace . . . so this is what it feels like." Nor am I inclined to ask others, "Are you at peace today . . . so what is it like for you"? This is the question that I now focus upon.

Deepening the Question

Until I began work on this study I did not really focus on moments of peace. I simply experienced peace without consciously attempting to understand the phenomenon. I wonder if I have paid close enough attention to experiences of personal peace in my past. Perhaps there is some truth held within the moment that identifies a peaceful path and makes the moment worthy of focus. When I am hurt my attention easily falls upon my pain. Does my attention easily fall on a moment of peace? What do I feel when the hurting stops? Do I feel nothing or do I feel comfort or gratitude? Is the phenomenology of peacefulness a study of absences? Is it something I know by its absence? What, if anything, exists in a moment of peace?

To assess the feasibility of personal peace as a research topic I began to seek out lived-experience stories of peaceful moments. Individuals provided rich descriptions of a moment which seemed cradled in the memory. Upon invitation, participants lifted a peaceful moment from the experiential context of their memories as stories were recalled with vivid details of sight, sound, smell and touch. In this way the peaceful moment was memorable and describable. From the stories, a profile of the peace experience began to emerge.

Participants frequently made comments when they had finished storytelling, that exemplified the importance of focussing on peaceful moments. One young man scribbled at the bottom of his peaceful moment story, "It saddened me to write this. I now see that I have had too few of these moments in my life." In this way he became aware of a personal change that he was seeking. Another stated months later, "Since you asked me to write this story, I have had many more peaceful moments." As though awakened by a question, this woman began to experience life differently.

My own focus began to change and I, too, became more mindful of peaceful experiences. Making peace explicit began a chain of change and reminded me that we are not limited to the state we are in. We grow and transform in our humanness. Mahoney (1991), who studies human change processes, commented that personal peace is a specific change that we are seeking.

A number of questions arose from my initial investigations. What does the world look like through peaceful eyes? Is the experience of peace an illusion? If it is real, can or does it last? How does one live peacefully? These questions, which emerged as secondary to questions about the nature of the peace experience itself, provided an expanded vantage point from which to comprehend personal experiences of peace.

Peace Pilgrim (1994) said, "If you want to make peace you must be peaceful" (p. 3). I wonder if she would say, "If you want to describe peace you must be peaceful." A professor asked me a related question, "Can I really be at peace without being blind to the suffering in the world"? Is peace like an oasis in the midst of the desert? Is it like a haven hidden from surrounding impoverishment by high fences which conceal squalor and starvation? Though I do not live in a third world country, I am not blind to the suffering. Suffering takes many forms. And with suffering comes disruptions to peace. The research question expands once again; Can I know peace and know pain simultaneously? Can I be at peace and be awake to the world around me? Maslow (1971), distinguished psychologist and key theoretician of humanistic and transpersonal psychology, believed that if an investigation is to be valuable it must touch on some enduring human problem. Peace somehow touches all human problems in that it intuitively speaks of a problem's resolution. Is there a body free of pain, a mind free of delusion or a heart of sorrow? What is the meaning of peacefulness in the context of life's suffering?

Relevance of the Study

As the exploration begins in search of understanding it is fair to ask, "What good is it to know"? I enter this research activity with the assumption that personal peace is a desired state for many. This belief is founded on my own experience and the experiences of others with whom I have become acquainted in my personal and professional life. Comments of participants, some of which have been reported in this chapter, also support the assumption that personal peace is a common goal. We may nod and say yes, we yearn for peace as though we know what it is. In some manner of knowing we may identify what it is that we yearn for. How clear is our understanding of peacefulness or of those aspects of our lives that invite it? Perhaps to really *know peace* means a knowledge that comes from the heart or, possibly, the soul. This study seeks to understand peacefulness at a deep level; one that goes beyond the language that is used to describe it.

The relevance of a study on peacefulness is further exemplified in comments of celebrated peacemakers who espouse the view that personal peace is intimately connected with planetary peace. For example, Mother Teresa taught that "one by one by one" we help achieve world peace by working toward inner peace (Vardey, 1995). Peace Pilgrim (1994) believed that the way to world peace is through attaining inner peace and then putting what is learned into compassionate action. The Dalai Lama, Tibetan leader and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, wrote these words: "Although attempting to bring about world peace through the internal transformation of individual lives is difficult, it is the only way" (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991, foreword).

The sheer volume of self-help literature and willingness to seek answers through a spiritual or 'beyond the self' quest are evidence that the search for personal peace is building momentum. Though spirituality and personal peace are not being equated in this thesis, it appears that the two concepts share a relationship. In seeking literature on peacefulness, it is often within the framework of spirituality that writings on peace are contained, for example, Dalai Lama (1994), Peck (1995), Thich Nhat Hanh (1991), Williamson (1992), to name a few. The relationship between spirituality and personal peace is explored further in this document (chapters two and four).

This is an age of healing centers, meditation, yoga, health food, homeopathy, mind-body healing and spiritual mentors. Looking where one cannot see with the naked eye, the eye of the soul searches now without recrimination. It is a time of uneasiness and slow enlightenment. It isn't just about us anymore. We are told our planet is dying. The existential implications are overwhelming. The time is ripe for a study that responds to a need for personal peace and reassurances amidst uncertainty and possible fear.

As a psychologist engaged in counselling practice, I have a growing 'library' of dark, heavy stories told by burdened story tellers, young and old. My chosen profession invites voices of anguish and hopes to co-author new stories of life written by the hand of peace. Nestled deep within the words of troubled lives, resting in small spaces between the symptoms, are stories of life's peaceful moments. My personal and professional goal is to move peacefulness into mainstream awareness. The relevance of centering on life's privileged moments is implicit in the intent of any helping profession. The purpose of this inquiry is to make explicit the centrality of personal peace in promoting well-being within ourselves and in those we serve as agents of change. Awareness that life's peaceful moments are cradled within our memories, holds the promise of living in peace as a reality rather than an elusive creation of our longing.

The Manner of Presentation

This research text is divided into six chapters. The introductory chapter is followed by a review of personal peace literature and related topics.

The third chapter describes the interpretive methodology which guides the study. Phenomenology, hermeneutics and narrative inquiry form the eclectic foundation upon which this study is built. The three guiding methodologies have in common that they are interpretive. What makes these methodologies significant for this study is that they are resources for my interpretive work.

In chapter four, the phenomenon of peacefulness is explored through stories, symbols and individual and group interviews. Some dimensions of meaning are more variant or incidental to the experience of peacefulness. Other dimensions would seem to be more invariant of the phenomenon of peacefulness. Six themes of peacefulness, derived from lived-experience descriptions, are analyzed and discussed: Rhythm of Accord, Promise in Peace, Inner Rejuvenation, Sweet Surrender in Peace, Kinship in Peace and

Window to Eternity. The six themes represent the more invariant features of the phenomenon, though it is clearly acknowledged that there are no absolute boundaries that define the experience. A description of personal peace experience, based on the emergent themes, is presented.

Chapter five presents exploration of three additional dimensions, which are presented as more variant themes of peacefulness: The Sensual Dimension of Peace, The Illusive Dimension of Peace, and The Practical Dimension of Peace. These aspects of meaning contribute to a collective signification that seems to describe the human experience of peacefulness.

The document concludes with a chapter of practical applications of the findings, future research directions and concluding comments.

Throughout the text multiple voices are used and multiple perspectives can be discerned. In the tradition of phenomenology 'I' or 'we' which represents a shared or more universal component of personal peace, is present in the text. For example, in the introductory chapter I ask the questions, "what if anything exists in a moment of peace. Do I feel nothing or do I feel comfort or gratitude"? In this instance, 'I' is generalized to include the reader into the recognition of a possible human experience. Also found in the text is a more personal or biographic 'I' which emphasizes the personal selves of the author and participants, as is seen in narrative inquiry. For example, in the introductory chapter I also speak on a personal level using 'I' in an autobiographic way. I make the statement, "My own focus began to change and I, too, became more mindful of peaceful experiences." In this statement my personal voice as researcher becomes clear. The importance of researcher voice has been emphasized by narrative researchers (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994). Rather than competing, the more general or shared aspects of voice and the more personal aspects are woven together in a hermeneutic of textual interpretation as the research story of peacefulness unfolds.

CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON PEACEFULNESS AND RELATED CONCEPTS

I can't utter the word peace without having a personal reaction to it. My mind's eye visualizes many moments of peace from my own life story and within the images I 'see' beauty all around me. My own experiences of peace are a place from which to start. I associate the concept with a mind that is free of chaos, a heart that is filled with love and a soul that is deeply satisfied. For myself, it is like the ultimate achievement in the development of personhood and, in a moment, it is as though I am the best human person that I can be. My sense of what peacefulness means leads me to search and research in a specific way. In one sense this concept is boundless, rarely appearing by its name in searches of psychological literature, yet being connected to many related experiences. A freedom emerges in studying peace which may be similar to the character of the experience of peace itself.

I achieved little success when I first began searching psychological, sociological and medical computer data bases for research papers, studies and other sources of information when I used the headings of personal peace or inner peace. The results remained sparse until I began researching related concepts (for example, serenity, tranquility, love, happiness, well-being) many of which will be discussed in the following text. The flood gates opened and the task became one of streamlining the flow of information. Some of the related concepts will be discussed in this chapter.

I expanded my search to include popular writings because personal peace is a favorite topic in today's literature. There is an abundance of information available on 'how to' become peaceful mostly presented in book form and found on the self-help shelves of quality bookstores and libraries. Within much of the available literature, the meaning of personal peace is either assumed or implied in the directives of what to do and what not to do to achieve it. Learned opinions are thus offered by celebrated pragmatists, spiritual leaders, psychologists and health professionals all providing valuable insights, many of which will be presented on the following pages.

This chapter borrows the thoughts of many writers on personal peace (and related experiences) and combines them with my preliminary comments. It is organized in the following way. It begins with an exploration of the semantic field of peace which involves research into the origins of the concept as well as discussions of related concepts of love, joy, hope and well-being. This is followed by a sampling of traditional symbols of peace as these contain meanings that have been attributed to peace over time. In addition, existent views of personal peace as negative (peace as absence of) and positive (peace as fulfillment) are discussed through traditional religious conceptions of personal peace and also through the notion of 'peace and quiet'. The question of whether or not it is always good to be at peace is discussed. This is followed by wisdoms of celebrated contemporary authors who show the way to peace. From their guidelines to peace can be discerned what they take peace to mean. The chapter concludes with the identification of specific moments or experiences that have been explored by researchers and writers as particularly significant in a lifetime of moments. This is relevant because the current study utilizes a specific moment in time, the peaceful moment, as a focal point for understanding the peace experience. The qualitatively different points in time which have been identified are peak and pyramid experience, mystical and religious experience, dark nights of the soul, authentic experience, real moments and stillpoints. These were chosen because of their connection to the peace experience.

In this chapter personal peace is explored through concept definitions and in the words of scholars, peacemakers and popular writers. I begin by rendering an account of the concepts we use, turning to language for my initial direction. Though I play with words for a while, it is the experience beneath the words that I ultimately seek to understand.

Exploring The Semantic Field

How does one tell another that they are at peace? What words might they use? I might say I am "at peace" and this could mean for the moment or it may mean something more lasting or pervasive. I might also say I am feeling "peaceful" or "full of peace." I might refer to the experience as peacefulness, personal peace, inner peace or peace of mind. Though the words vary somewhat the same psychological form of event is likely being described. The peace experience might also be articulated in relation to something else. For example, I might be at peace with a friend, my family, my work, an illness, a decision, an event, my past and even with life itself.

In everyday thought and experience certain words seem to contain similar sentiments to peace and spontaneously are associated with the experience. When I first began to explore personal peace I jotted down all the words that came to mind as I thought about being at peace. I immediately wrote the following words: stillness, calm, quiet, serenity, tranquility, beauty, love, happiness, gratitude, harmony, balance, order, relaxation, nature, health and well-being. I invited others to engage in this exercise and the words I had identified were repeatedly offered as having some commonality with peace. In addition, the following were indicated: simplicity, knowing and accepting myself, sincerity, lack of stress, confidence, faith, hope, contentment, joy. As the study progressed other concepts emerged as part and parcel of analysis, couched within stories and experiences.

Within the semantic field of the concept of peacefulness virtuous language grows like colorful flowers in a garden. It is joyous to simply wander through. Yet there is more to the story than a promise of a rose garden or a hill of red poppies blowing in the wind as though an aftermath of some event less gentle and kind. What came before the peace? What followed it? What lies beneath the poppies nurturing their brilliance? I turn to the language that speaks of an absence of peace. The following words were written down by myself and others as we sought to name what intuitively appeared to be opposite to peace: sadness, depression, fear, confusion, chaos, anxiety, pain, tension, frustration, agitation, upset, life's problems, alienation, isolation, hopelessness, noise, grief, hurrying, striving, busyness, expectation, hatred, sickness. As I write these words I become 'stirred up' inside. I do not like the feeling.

It can be seen, that within the semantic field of personal peace are words like love and hate, relaxation and tension, joy and sadness, hope and despair, order and chaos, quiet and noise, sickness and health and other pairs of opposing forces. Life's tensions present themselves in a study of peace as though it is a study of existence itself. Like two sides of a coin, like the yin and the yang, I am reminded that both light and darkness exist in one day on earth and in one life lived there. Is personal peace about dichotomies? William Hague professor of educational psychology at the University of Alberta, commented about dichotomies in his recent book, *Evolving Spirituality*, "Maybe our long years of dichotomizing, of opposing love and hate, suffering and joy, life and death, have made us create too many contradictions that are not really there" (Hague, 1995, p. 118). I begin to think of resolution and of rhythm and balance. I visualize peace as resting at a center point somewhere between tensions. The semantic field grows.

To The Root Of The Matter

With related meaning spreading itself in many directions, understanding is best sought within the root system. Thus I research the origins of the word peace and consider those words which are most closely related. It has been estimated that prior to 1140 the notion of peace appeared as *pais*, later *pes* (probably about 1200), and *peace* (1358); borrowed from Old French *pais, peis, pes*, from Latin *pacem* (nominative *pax*) treaty of peace, tranquility, absence of war (Barnhart, 1988, p. 767). Peace is related to *'pascisci'*, to make a treaty, to pact, to make a covenant (Barnhart, 1988, p. 767; Klein, 1966-67, p. 1143). Being at peace implies that some accord has been struck. There is a distinct relational quality to being at peace as I am always at peace *with* something. For example, I can be at peace with others, with my 'self', with my life.

In being at peace there is a suggestion that something has changed. Something has been transformed from being unsettled to settled in an experience of peacefulness. Chaos becomes order, anguish is stilled, friendly relations are restored. War becomes peace as feuding factions are reconciled. Agreement and harmony are re-established in a contract that is distinguished by the promise or understanding contained within. There has been a reconciliation of sorts marked by a cessation of disturbance. When at peace I have arrived at an accord with myself and my world. In arriving, there is the implicit assumption that something else existed which has been left behind. Can I know peace without knowing war? Can I experience resolution without prior conflict? Is this the calm after the storm?

The words 'peace', 'serenity' and 'tranquility' are often used in reference to a similar experience. Perhaps each is a component of the other and cannot be separated in the experience itself. Yet a further search may uncover subtle differences despite due respect for the interrelatedness that characterizes not only the words we use but the lived experience described therein.

Webster's College Dictionary (1991, p. 993) identifies the adjectives 'placid', 'serene' and 'tranquil' as synonymous to peaceful and suggests that they may be more readily applied to a person than the term 'peaceful'. When referring to a placid disposition there is a suggestion of an unruffled calm as might be experienced in moments of deepest peace. Yet complacency also tends to characterize an unexamined life. The placid person is able to turn a blind eye to that which ruffles experience. There is little to reconcile if ignorance or denial predominates. This is unlike the experience of calm knowing which comes from resolution. The calm which exists in moments of peace is a different calmness as those forces that stir havoc have been resolved.

Tranquility implies a command of emotions that keeps one unagitated even in the midst of excitement or danger, according to Webster's College Dictionary (1991, p. 1415). The word is derived from the Latin *tranquillus* (quiet, calm) for *trans-quil-nos,* very quiet, formed from *trans,* used in the sense of *exceedingly* or *beyond* and *quies,* rest, quiet (Barnhart, 1988, p. 1158). As though an end in itself, one can seek tranquility as if on a vacation. I escape to my quiet getaway, perhaps my lake cottage, and I may become tranquil as I tune in to the stillness of my surroundings. My intent was to do so. I planned it that way and as though tranquilized by my surroundings, I am made still. When I drive away from my lakeside cottage I reluctantly glance back wishing I could stay just a little longer. As I return to less tranquil settings I may or may not do so with a sense of peace. I may or may not have come to terms with those pieces of my life that threaten disruption and chaos.

Reminiscent of the rest and relaxation that can be created in the outside world, is the inner journey that can be taken as when one visits a safe place in the calm and quiet vestibules of the mind. I can use my imagination to take me away from my troubles and make myself tranquil. And during a moment of tranquility I may be invited into an accord, a kinship with myself and my world. A state of tranquility is conducive to peaceful resolve but is no guarantee of peacefulness as I may simply 'put aside' the troubles for now, remove myself, in the stillness of tranquility. This is different than a 'coming to terms' with something as when 'I make peace with'. No doubt I experience a tranquility deep in my soul when at peace. Once the agreement exists, the soul rests.

And if there is no agreement can the soul rest? If tranquilized by drugs or alcohol does that 'peaceful easy feeling' represent peace or a fool's oblivion? In a search for intimacy does mere promiscuity provide a 'peacefilled' satisfaction? In a desire to have, can I steal the affections or belongings of another or overthrow to gain a sense of who I am? False symbols that betray present themselves in the guise of peace. When the means to achieve peace are not themselves peaceful, is it possible to experience personal peace as the outcome?

I wonder if I can make myself peaceful as I can tranquil? Can I seek peace of mind as I do tranquility? Have I escaped to peace as I might to a state of body and mind which invites it or have I faced the enemy and become reconciled? And I wonder, if I do not find my getaway, can I know of peace at all? In a dialectic with my busy life can I come to some amicable agreement?

Of the closely related experiences of calmness, tranquility and serenity, it is the latter that has been hailed as the most high. Considered a nobler word, it suggests dignity, composure and graciousness (Webster's College Dictionary, 1991, p. 1223). Deriving from the Latin *serenus* meaning clear, bright and calm (Klein, 1966-67, p. 1422) it can refer to the atmospheric conditions of the sky and the internal condition of the soul. Bollnow (1989) indicates, "In a human being, serenity is a clarifying medium which brings all the troubles of the world almost naturally to a rest" (p. 56). He comments that it radiates to others who may then participate in its clearness. Considered to be a special virtue of the mature educator, it cannot be demanded but rather is granted once one has come to terms and balance with the troubles of life. In this way it appears to be most closely related to being at peace. As a special virtue, does serenity encompass being at peace?

If my peace is lasting does it then permeate my entire being and radiate a disposition of serenity that is, now and forever, who I am? Am I then a peaceful person? Am I more or less peaceful by how long my peaceful moment lasts? Can I measure my peacefulness by duration or by frequency of the moments? Or is it in the value I place on a life of moments?

I play with the words of peace in an effort to understand the conceptual differences that represent experience and, as I do, more questions emerge. This opening of thought invites conversation which may be pursued elsewhere in this study. The synonyms of peace have been reviewed and questions of meaning amongst the concepts have been deliberated at this beginning point of my study. In doing so, some issues surrounding the experience of peacefulness have been introduced.

Many of the words, concepts and sentiments intimately associated with peace will reappear throughout the body of this document. However an in-depth analysis is beyond the scope of this study and has enjoyed vigorous exploration elsewhere. A brief commentary on associated concepts is offered.

Peace and Love

Love has been a much contemplated and researched topic from the beginning of time and it has been said that it makes the world go 'round. It is often spoken of within a context of peace. Intuitively, love and peace go hand in hand and it is often in the same breath that they are wished upon a person, as at special times such as Christmas when we wish for peace and love throughout the land. Love has been a favorite topic of many writers (Buscaglia, 1982; De Angeles, 1995; Fromm, 1956; James, 1985 (religious love); Jampolsky, 1993; Janas, 1990; Peck, 1995; Seigel, 1989; Strasser, 1977; Williamson, 1992). In religious studies and writings, the love of God is closely related to personal peace. In the writings of the Christian mystics and those who write about them can be found passionate discussions and testimonials of this relationship. Peace, love, beauty, joy, bliss and ecstasy in the presence of God are themes in the writings of St. John of the Cross, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Teresa of Avila, Gregory of Nyssa and others who are quoted by writers of spirituality (Hague, 1995; James, 1985; Merton, 1951).

Peace and Joy

Joy and its synonym, happiness, are often contemplated and studied in the same works as love and most of the above references make mention of these feelings. As with love they appear to be part of the constellation which comprises peaceful experience though it could not be said that joy is peace and peace is joy. There may be great joy in a moment of peace as one beholds a newborn child yet one can also know peace while sitting in a chapel grieving for a departed friend. Happiness is part of the peace picture but, at this early stage of my study, I can only comment that it is not the whole picture. The original work of Stephen Strasser (Das Gemut) first published in 1956, presented a phenomenological analysis of feelings with comprehensive writings on the experiences of joy and happiness, including rapture and bliss (for translation see Strasser, 1977). For extensive writings on the topic of happiness, Taoist, Buddhist and Hindu teachings and most writings related to eastern philosophy, are rich with means for attainment of happiness and bliss (Bikkhu Anoma Mahinda, 1996; Dalai Lama, 1994; de Bary, 1958; Shri Sadfuru Devai Namah, 1979; Welch, 1957). It is often the case that, in search of peace and happiness, we journey with the teachers of Eastern philosophy and religion as can be seen by the recent increase in Eastern mind-body integrative practices such as meditation, mindfulness and the like. Peace and happiness have been intimately interwoven in these teachings.

Peace and Hope

As I contemplate moments of peace from my own experience I am able to say, with assurance, that hopelessness and despair are absent in those moments. It is not as clear whether hope is present but it raises the question of whether the concept of peace encompasses hope. I was unable to find any research directly linking the two but when reviewing hope literature I was of the opinion that peace and hope share a relationship. Though studying hope at this time goes beyond the intent of this study, it is relevant to entertain a possible relationship as I seek the meaning of related concepts. I note, with interest, the steadily increasing research literature on the subject of hope which, like peace, is both esoteric and pragmatic (Block, 1986; Breznitz, 1986; Burnham, McCoy and Meeks, 1988; Cousins, 1989; Dufrane, 1984; Jevne, 1991, 1994; Morse and Doberneck, 1995; Orne, 1968; Staats, 1989). In considering both concepts of hope and peace, Jevne recently commented, "Hope appears more related to the uncertainty of a circumstance while peace seems more associated with some version of resolution, if not without then with process"

(Jevne, personal communication, July 2, 1999). In considering the two concepts, hope and peace, I was reminded of an entry that I made in my journal.

> A weight bears down on me in the specific fear that I will not complete my writings. Feeling small and insignificant in the vastness of the task, I am not able to write today. Scurry to safer ground.
>
> (Journal entry, Sept. 1998)

I attempt to retrieve hope and find peace with the writing process.

> I seek a place of peace within myself that allows me to continue my work. I am past the intersection. There is a place of light at the end -- knowing this must be enough. I visualize successful completion and review my progress. I rest easier as the night cloaks me in comfort.
>
> (Journal entry, Sept. 1998)

Jevne (1994) has studied hope through personal experience and indicates that hope can be found in the spaces between the dichotomies of life such as between doubt and faith, concrete and intangible, secular and sacred. If hope is the place between life tensions perhaps peace is the rising above tensions. In this way peace may be more about a transcendent experience than hope. Peace and hope can be conceptualized as compatible yet hope often connotes of future orientation. As Jevne (1994) comments, "Hope pulls us forward" (p. 79). Though not without hope, peace may be more about resolution in the present moment.

Peace and the Language of Wellness

Peace seems to be associated with a sense of well-being, health and harmony. This brings us face to face with the mystery of harmonia, balance, equilibrium and life's rhythms. Health has been defined as a condition of inner accord, of harmony with oneself that cannot be overridden by other external forms of control (Gadamer, 1996). Gadamer indicates that the character of health manifests itself in a general feeling of well-being. He refers to health as an enigma, having a hidden character which is barely registered in consciousness. Gadamer's question is one of the lived experience of health and well-being. We notice when we hurt. Do we notice when the hurting stops? Gadamer asks what is well-being if it is not precisely this condition of not noticing, of being unhindered. This insight corresponds with my clear experience and easy identification of moments that are filled with mental chaos, distress, anguish and the like; moments of *dis*order and *im*balance. At the time of experiencing I may even comment to a friend that this moment is so heavy it is intolerable and wish that someone could lift the burden from my shoulders. What do I experience when the burden is gone and all is running smoothly in perfect harmony? Is it peace I experience?

Both well-being and personal peace come under the same umbrella of positive psychological functioning. Historically, mental health research is dramatically weighted on the side of psychological dysfunction. Humanistic psychology has been instrumental in shifting the emphasis and the result has been an increase in the study of health as opposed to illness. Individuals such as Erikson (1959, 1968), Frankl (1959, 1978), Maslow (1971, 1977) and Rogers (1961, 1982) promote human potential and optimal functioning thus focussing on the ultimately healthy individual. Though the concept of personal peace has not been systematically studied by psychology under its own name, the concept of well-being has enjoyed considerable research (Bradburn, 1969; Diener, 1984; Kennedy, Kaanthamani and Palmer, 1994; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Ryff and Singer, 1996; Zika and Chamberlain, 1992). It is the basis for quality-of-life measures that are becoming widely used in health research (Bech, 1993; Stewart and Ware, 1992). The concept of well-being, as widely defined by Diener, (1984) is a global assessment of all aspects of a person's life. In studies, inconsistent terminology to describe this global concept has been noted by Ryff and Singer (1996) thus differing factors have been purported to comprise this optimal state of body and mind. When considering the concept of personal peace, like well-being, it intuitively impresses as having a global inclusive quality as a constellation or composite term. Turning to lived experience for consideration of its composition and characteristics may further contribute the literature of well-being.

Traditional Images of Peace

In the above exploration of the semantic field, peace as a concept and related words and concepts have been explored because one way that people communicate meaning is through words. In the history of humankind, pictorial representations and objects as symbols have also been used to denote meaning. In this study the voices of participants have been heard as they convey their stories of peace. This study also uses objects as symbols of peace to study the personal peace experience (described in chapter three). As such, understanding traditional images of peace becomes significant in informing this study.

As fragments of the physical world, tangible objects are often imbued with a special significance because they act as a bridge between the inner world of instinct, intuition and experience and the outer world of form (Fontana, 1994; Jung, 1964). Objects can then become more than the form itself and thus be transformed into symbols which can be either idiosyncratic or more universal in meaningfulness. Carl Jung (1964), offers the following definition of 'symbol': "What we call a symbol is a term, a name or even a picture that may be familiar in daily life, yet possesses specific connotations in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning. It implies something vague, unknown or hidden from us" (p. 20). With symbol, there is a wider unconscious aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained. From this perspective a symbol is always more than what it appears to be.

Like a symbol, a sign is representative but it is always less than the concept it represents (Cooper, 1978; Jung, 1964). By this is meant that, strictly speaking, it may not entice the imagination or lead beyond itself in terms of meaning or psychological import. Unlike the sign, emblem or allegory, the symbol does not merely equate or stand for some form. According to Cooper, the symbol contains the perception of fundamental relationships between seemingly diverse forms or appearances. This author explains that the differences between signs and symbols can be ill defined in that one can lead to the other. The sign can embody symbolic quality and thus be more than a sign. In like manner, a symbol can act as a sign though as Cooper states, "A symbol can never be a mere form, as is the sign, nor can it be understood except in the context of its religious, cultural or metaphysical background, the soil from which it grew" (p. 7). For the purposes of this study it is symbolic representations that are significant in that it is meaning that is relevant in understanding personal peace.

How have people traditionally represented experiences of peace? Whether consciously or unconsciously derived, there are symbols and images which have persisted over time and are collectively understood to represent peace. Because global peace and personal peace are not mutually exclusive, the umbrella term of peace was used in researching collective symbolic representations. The following is a sampling of traditional symbolic images which, in some way, represent the meaning of peace.

Colors affect the psyche and can alter mood or be an expression of a feeling. The psychiatric use of color in treatment of mental disorders reflects the belief that color can influence the psyche directly and profoundly. Blue is the hue of intellect, peace and contemplation (Fontana, 1994). According to Fontana, it represents water and coolness, the sky, infinity, the emptiness from which existence arises and to which it returns. To the Christian it denotes faith and compassion. The ancient Greeks attributed the color blue to the goddess of love. The color green, which stands for nature and growth, has also been linked with peace (Olderr, 1992).

Certain geometric shapes appear to have psychological power and the most direct explanation is that they symbolize human emotions. Architects have recognized this property since ancient times. Visitors who encounter the classic Roman or Greek architectural sites have reported a sense of tranquility that is lasting (Fontana, 1994). Symmetrical, rounded shapes represent feelings of relaxation and inner peace according to this author. The circle is also associated with perfection, infinity and it is often used as a symbol of God.

Music has had associations with peace and pipe music in particular has been indicated as a symbol of peace (Olderr, 1992). Music symbolizes order and harmony behind creation. Music's traditional association with peace resonates with lived experience in its capacity to extend harmony and rhythm beyond itself, calming and soothing the mind, body and spirit. It is easy to imagine peace flowing within the sweet sounds of a favorite musical piece, as the mind is emptied of turmoil, the body of tension and the soul is lifted in a melodious dance.

Food has many positive overtones as it represents abundance and celebration, however it is most often linked with peace and the resolution of differences (Olderr, 1992). According to Olderr, this association seems to be derived from the belief that food is imbued with a life-force that is connecting to a primal source of energy, that being universal fellowship. Certain foods, such as those made with corn, have been particularly symbolic of peace historically and it was considered a serious violation to cause harm to someone with whom one had broken bread. I think of how, at times of celebrations such as Easter and Christmas, food is offered as a gesture of love and peace. When we break bread together we share more than the food. In this way it is like a pact of peace and love.

Specific birds have been used to represent peace as have wings themselves. The mythical phoenix, which is half eagle and half pheasant, symbolizes resurrection, immortality and mankind's indestructible spirit (Cooper, 1978). According to Cooper, the phoenix, which is referred to as a harbinger of peace, rises from the ashes rejuvenated. Cooper also indicates that the dove carrying an olive branch in its mouth is the classic representation of peace and stands for the Holy Spirit. It is a symbol of the end of the great flood when a dove brought an olive branch to Noah. Christians understand the symbol to mean a soul that has made its peace with God. In this way the dove, as a peace symbol, is associated with reconciliation.

The natural world abounds with symbols of peace. In ancient times, experience was understood only in relation to the natural world, every aspect of which was believed to express a particular feature of divine energy (Fontana, 1994). A widespread belief that mankind was part of nature, rather than its master, was exemplified in images of tree-man and the gods depicted as embodiments of nature. According to Fontana, the tree, which is one of humankind's most potent symbols, is a symbol of peace and it is the embodiment of life, the point of union of heaven, earth and water. Individual species such as the fig, palm and olive tree acquired their own culture specific significance as symbols of peace. The tree of life, known the world over, stands at the center of paradise representing perfect harmony. The twelve fruit in the branches are rewards of the spirit such as wisdom, love, peace and beauty.

Mountain and valley motifs are often used to symbolize peace (Fontana, 1994). The mountain represents masculine energy, eternity and ascent from animal to spiritual nature. The valley, also a symbol of peace, is considered to be a protective feminine symbol associated with fertility. That there is "peace in the valley", as there is also peace beholding the world from a mountain top, rings true from the perspective of personal experience. I think of a rhythm to life with its peaks and troughs and wonder about the rhythm of peace itself. How is peace related to the 'peaks and troughs' of life? Can it rest in the stillness of grief? Can it be felt in the vigor and excitement of a great achievement? According to Fontana, rivers and streams have also traditionally represented peace and are associated with purification, life and as carriers of life-force. Perhaps peace has to do with life-force and energy.

In North American Aboriginal culture, smoke symbolizes peace and also the path followed at death (Leitch, 1979). According to Leitch, smoke is often used in purification rituals such as sweetgrass ceremonies whereby the smoke is said to wash over a person and be cleansing and healing. Smoking the peace pipe with enemies symbolizes amicable agreement.

In a representation of reconciliation of opposites, peace symbols have traditionally involved such images as a leopard, lion or wolf lying with a lamb, a calf or kid (Olderr, 1992). Symbols of war and peace often involve reconciliation of opposites as well. For example, the pictorial peace symbol or anti-nuclear emblem is interpreted in Germanic countries as the rune (ruin) of death *('Todesrune')*, or an inverted life rune (Luingman, 1991). According to Helfman (1967), at a psychological level, war is generally pictured as aggressive energy, often male, while peace has traditionally been symbolized as a passive, receptive energy often symbolized as female energy which creates and nurtures life. Balance between opposing forces is clearly represented in the ancient Eastern symbol the Tai Chi (Yin Yang). Male and female, right and left, life and death, good and evil are presented as not in conflict and as dependent on one another for their own expression. According to Helfman, the Chinese believed that clouds were formed from the union of yin and yang and therefore symbolize peace.

Symbols considered to be feminine are often indicated as peaceful symbols (Olderr, 1992). According to Olderr, the jewel of the pearl has been associated with the feminine and with wisdom. Pearls symbolize patience, purity and peace. Because the pearl resides in the depths of the ocean within an oyster shell, this symbol of peace is connected to hidden knowledge. Silver, which is also a feminine symbol, stands for virginity and eloquence and when polished it represents the soul cleansed of sin. Purity and peace appear to be associated through this symbol.

As the ultimate place where peace abounds, depictions of heaven and paradise necessarily involve peace in its pristine form. Christian artists often depict heaven as a beautiful garden or orchard. In ancient Egyptian traditions, heaven was depicted as a place of inner peace and liberation from carnal desires (Fontana, 1994).

Traditional symbols of peace are numerous and are listed in signs and symbols dictionaries and encyclopaedias. A few others include animals such as the ass and beaver, cattle or a single horse grazing in a pasture, lion eating straw, evening, a bridge, an open gate, a flowing or full robe and a house chimney (Olderr, 1992).

In summary, from ancient times the peace experience has been represented in symbolic form. Many symbols have passed the test of time in their universally shared meaning. Others have been common within a culture or more specifically symbolic within a certain historical period. What peace is taken to mean by humankind over time has been exemplified in the above symbols and their associated meanings.

Is Peace A Study Of Absences?

Of relevance to this study is the composition of the peace experience. What rests in the moment between tensions? What is *there* when the hurting stops? Whether speaking of a quiet mind, a silenced anguish, a moment of stillness or the end of a war, it seems to be cessation that marks the presence of peace. Is it a moment of 'something' or is it 'nothing'? The great religions of the world have made reference to peace as both a negative term (as cessation) and a positive term (as fulfillment). Used in this context positive means features that are present and negative means features that are removed, or simply not there. A discussion of historic religious viewpoints related to peace follows. In addition, the notion of peace and quiet is considered relevant to an exploration of peace as absence and thus is briefly explored.

Peace and Religion

According to the Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics, within a religious or spiritual context, historically peace has tended to denote cessation of divine wrath, freedom from disturbing sense of guilt or from inner turmoil and conflict (Childress and Macquarrie, 1986, p. 460). It could be asked of peace, is there a felt presence at all? Gadamer's discussion of the enigma of health, as previously introduced, is relevant in considering this question. Perhaps we simply don't notice when all is well, as he suggests. But what is there to notice? Is peace negative in the sense that it is the absence of something or could it be said that a moment of peace is a fulfilled moment containing its own 'positive' essence?

I encountered discrepant views on the meaning of peace in researching peace within a religious context. In a negative sense, religious traditions speak of peace as freedom from war and unrest. Peace can also take a positive meaning of well-being and fulfillment as goals of religious and social life. According to the Encyclopedia of Religion (Eliade, 1987) in ancient Greece the word for peace, *eirene*, meant primarily the opposite of war, and even when personified as a goddess, *Eirene*, had no mythology and little cult, thus exemplifying the lack of features or negative view. The Roman, *Pax*, was also a vague goddess who was taken as the representation of quiet and the absence of internal strife (p. 223).

In ancient Hebrew thought, peace (*shalom*) was not simply the absence of war but carried the positive connotation of well-being and prosperity. The Israelites used the Hebrew word, *shalom*, to refer to material and spiritual conditions which were joined together. For the ancient Israelite, *shalom* was all that makes for wholeness and prosperity according to the Dictionary of Christian Spirituality (Wakefield, 1983, p. 291 - 292). It refers to a positive state within the individual and communal life in the presence of God. *Shalom* was something visible in its manifestation of social harmony and was used as a greeting as was the case in Arabic tradition where the word *Salam* meant peace or health.

As indicated in Wakefield (1983), in the New Testament, for the neophyte Christians, the good news was proclaimed in a *gospel of peace* (Luke 2:14; 10:5-6; Acts 10:36; Eph. 6:15) which encompassed the characteristic greeting of the risen Christ, "Peace to you" (Luke 24:36; John 20:19, 21, 26). Peace is given the positive meaning of the Hebrew, *eirene,* and encompasses the presence of the risen Christ and the blessings of Holy Spirit. More distinctive among the first Christians, was peace in the sense of inward spiritual calm, the serenity of a secure relationship with God. Thus, though in the history of the Christian church there was a concern for political matters of war and peace (thus peace seen as cessation of violence), there was also a concern for peace in a spiritual sense as peace of soul. This encompassed the presence of God and peace as God's gift as exemplified in the parting words of Christ, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you, not as the world gives it" (Jn. 14:27, cited in Eliade, 1987, p. 223). The Fruits of the Spirit included peace among virtues such as patience, kindness and forbearance. As indicated in Eliade (1987), the apostle Paul used the word peace repeatedly in his epistles to sum up all his most heartfelt hopes for his readers. In this way, the word peace, as a greeting, carried with it much more than simply a wish for cessation of troubles, but rather overflowed with a content so rich as to be considered a blessing.

Both social and personal ideals of peace have been important concerns of Chinese religious leaders and thinkers. (For reference to Chinese religious tradition see *Sources of Chinese Tradition,* de Bary, 1960 and *Parting of the Way,* Welch, 1957.) According to sources the Taoist classic, Tao Te Ching, which is the way of life of the Taoism, is considered to present a serene philosophy. Its teaching of *the way* as one of absences, originated with its founding prophet, Lao Tzu. He espoused a doctrine of *wu wei,* which literally means not doing and has been interpreted to mean avoidance of aggression. *Wu wei* is the highest ethical good and means no struggle, not hostility, not aggression and therefore is negative. The Tao itself was symbolized by the mysterious female because of birth motif and by the valley spirit because of motif of emptiness. In the Tao Te Ching it is not so much the search for peace but the search for *P'u*, the uncarved block of our original nature which is without aggression. This is conceived of as a push toward the *void*, the quietness, the beginning (seen as blank, childlike, untutored, dark and nameless). Lao Tzu completes his list of negatives with a series of excisions such as not desire, not morality and not opinion allowing instead the true way of *wu wei*, which is to allow everything to act according to its nature. The philosophy is complex and goes beyond my simplistic interpretation, however the question of peace as cessation and 'absence of' is indicated.

Indian views of peace are both personal and social, positive and negative. Indian teachings have been referenced in *Sources of Indian Tradition* (de Bary, 1958). According to this source, the peace invoked in the Sanskrit texts (sacred Hindu texts) and indicated by the word, *santih*, is one of tranquility, quiet, calmness of mind, absence of passion, aversion of pain and indifference to the objects of pleasure and pain. Non-violence, amongst the Jains in India is considered to be the highest religion and they teach that *nirvana* is an indescribable and passionless state beyond this world, at the ceiling of the universe. The Buddhists have also taught *nirvana* and have done so in negative terms (Welch, 1957). *Nirvana* is perceived of as unborn, unrivalled, secure from attachment, unlamenting and unsustained. To seek peace would be to reach in and experience *nirvana*. The essence of Tibetan Buddhism, as contained in the Sutras, sacred scripture, is to achieve *nirvana* which is conceived of as liberation; freedom from the weight of past deeds, desires, hatred and ignorance (Dalai Lama, 1994). Peace as nirvana consists of a state of mind whereby there is cessation of suffering following the path of enlightenment.

Historically, the great religions of the world have aspired to identify optimal states or destinies for their members in communal, personal and transpersonal realms. Whether it is the peace of God handed down as a blessing or the Nirvana of Buddha achieved through great discipline, the experience of peace enjoys both reference to positive and negative aspects in that it is about absences as much as it is about fulfillment.

Peace and Quiet

Intuitively, silence has a greater grasp on peace than does noise. It is associated with peace both in terms of being undisturbed by the outside world as well as being somehow present within the experience itself. We often wait for a little peace and quiet, a moment when the noise of the world is stilled and we can breathe deeply, sigh, and say, "Peace at last." If we are lucky we will also find that we feel quiet inside and we can be genuinely at peace. What is *there* in the silence of peace? Are there sounds to the silence? I am reminded of Bollnow's anthropological findings on silence (1982). He indicated that genuine silence is not simply 'not speaking' but rather it is a fulfillment that transcends speech. He moves away from the idea that it is a moment of nothing explaining rather that speech fades into nothingness. He comments on the Japanese use of the word nothingness as, "The shapeless primal ground that struggles for shape and from which all shaping emerges and in which all shaping remains rooted" (pp. 46-47). In conceiving of silence in this way, it is not an empty space but rather filled with truth and insight. Fulfilled silence is likened to being in truth; to being privy to the truth of life. This perspective on nothingness and on silence sheds insight when considering the issue of peace as a negative concept; an experience of absences. In a backdrop of understanding what is absent in peace, this study endeavors to further understand the positives, that which is present in peace.

Is It Always Good To Be At Peace?

I recently watched a film production, *The Big Lebowski* (E. Coen & J. Coen, 1998) which reintroduced a question originally asked of me by one of my dissertation committee members, Dr. van Manen. Is being at peace always a good thing? The main character in this film is a 50 year old, unemployed, marijuana-smoking, harmless ex-hippie named Duke. In his role as a pacifist he is constantly calming his dangerously deranged Vietnam veteran crony. He harms no one, showing little anger and exhibiting no aggression. He is quite satisfied with himself and despite fleeting remnants of a strong intellect from days past, he lacks motivation idling away his days at the bowling alley, avoiding any responsibility and essentially representing a root-less, unachieved, unstriving lifestyle. Is he at peace? He personifies the absences spoken of earlier; there is a cessation of everything in his life other than self-indulgence. He is harmless, peace-loving and irritatingly patient. He is calm, satisfied and unrealized in terms of developmental potential. He has no cognitive dissonance and there is no positive disintegration of the old to bring on the new, better person.

In psychology cognitive dissonance has a primary role in human development and also in change theory as the individual responds to discomfort and seeks out a new and better balance (Erikson, 1959; Kohlberg, 1981; Mahoney, 1991; Piaget, 1950, 1979). The notion that times of emotional and physical pain and other dark nights of the soul are windows of opportunity for personal betterment has been addressed by many writers (Borysenko, 1993; Hay, 1984; Jevne, 1991; Kubler-Ross, 1982; Merton, 1951; St. John of the Cross, in James, 1985). Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration (Dabrowski, 1970) proposes that psychological breaking down is a necessary condition of mental growth leading to higher levels of development. Other contemporary researchers have utilized Dabrowski's theory as a springboard in their studies of advanced human functioning. For example, Piechowski (1992, 1993) studies giftedness and extraordinary lives, Silverman (1989) researches inner conflict as a path to high level development in women, and Hague (1995) discusses positive disintegration and state of the art moral development. These authors establish that we learn and grow through adversity. Where does this leave inner peace in terms of achieving optimal human functioning? Is it always good to be at peace? The character of Duke, mentioned above, who seems unfettered and content presents as the antithesis of the self-actualized individual. Whether or not this is true peace is another question. Nonetheless, this non-violent character underscores the question of whether peace is always a positive state, particularly in relation to development of human potential.

The Path To Peace; Contemporaries Show Us The Way

Covenants of how to live date back to the 'first stories' of all times as is seen in the Ten Commandments handed down from Moses to the Hebrews (Old Testament) and the Tao Te Ching, Lao Tzu's serene way of Taoists (Welch, 1957). Today's celebrated guides for living promote 'peacefilled' solutions to life's problems and set us on a path to personal peace (for example, Borysenko, 1993; Chopra, 1993, 1997; Dalai Lama, 1994; Jampolsky and Cirincione 1993; Mother Teresa cited in Vardey, 1995; Peace Pilgrim, 1994; Siegel, 1989; Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991; Williamson, 1992). Mental health professionals, medical practitioners, peace-lovers and peacemakers have responded to a growing need for peaceful influences in busy, competitive lives. The result has been an abundance of literature on how to become peaceful and an equally abundant population thirsting for more. Between the lines directing change can be found suggestions of what peace means though this is more difficult to discern from the writings than are guidelines to its attainment. Following is a sample of comments and themes taken from the writings of several celebrated authors, healers or otherwise influential contemporaries.

In seeking words of wisdom pertaining to becoming peaceful, one may choose to follow the comments of psychiatrist and author, Dr. G. Jampolsky, who writes and lectures on the topic in conjunction with his partner, D. Cirincione, (see Jampolsky and Cirincione, 1993). Their teachings are based on the philosophy of attitudinal healing and according to their beliefs, if you change your mind you will change your life. To become peaceful you must let go of fear and choose love. Peace is very much a matter of choice. Trust, faith, hope and finding purpose in our lives all enter into the 'peacefilled' content of Jampolsky's writings. According to this author, peace is a matter of choice.

Maryanne Williamson (1992), who believes in miracles in everyday life, is a lecturer in the field of spirituality and new thought. A return to love and relinquishment of fear are the themes of her writings and she emphasizes, like Dr. Jampolsky, that forgiveness is a key to inner peace. To find peace, love must be the focus and inner peace the goal. There is a realm of constant peace into which one can enter. At the essence of every human mind is divine love. To Williamson, peace is like the experience of love and involves a spiritual surrender.

The voice of the current Dalai Lama of Tibet has been heard by many as an influential informant on the way of peace. Having won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 more than qualifies him as a celebrated spokesman. As is the theme running through Dr. Jampolsky's writing, the Dalai Lama teaches that we must train our minds and that our fate is up to us, though Jampolsky leans more towards faith and trust. Buddhist practice strives for everlasting peace in a deterministic philosophy which places onus on the individual to gain freedom from the cycle of suffering. From this perspective we must tame our minds or fall into the abyss. The path is one of spiritual progress leading to enlightenment. Along the path, the Dalai Lama would say we must do good deeds and abandon vengefulness (Dalai Lama, 1994). As emphasized by Williamson, forgiveness becomes key. He teaches that the principal motive impelling great Buddhist-like qualities is compassion taken to mean a wish that others be free of suffering. Compassion, love and altruism have much to do with peace from the Dalai Lama's perspective.

Compassionate action was referred to as primary in attainment of peace according to Peace Pilgrim (1994), who walked for peace from 1953 until her death in 1981. Basic to her philosophy was living the law of love. A simple woman, she quietly sought her peace and taught her peace to others along her path. To Peace Pilgrim (1994), peace involves a spiritual journey.

"Works of love are works of peace." These words were spoken by Mother Teresa more than once and can be seen on the cover of a book of photography utilizing the exact words as its title (Collopy, 1996). Her compassionate action and countenance of peace brought her world wide recognition not only in her winning of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 but through her formula of simplicity. She would say that one by one by one we can help achieve world peace by working toward inner peace. From her perspective, by telling a family member something kind and encouraging, we have begun our peace work. She shares her story of a simple path and in her own words indicates, "I can tell you about my path but I'm only a little wire - God is the power" (Vardey, 1995, p. xi). Peace is perceived of as the fruit of service.

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Buddhist monk honored for his efforts toward world peace, would agree with Mother Teresa and he would add that the most basic kind of peace work is smiling. He refers to universal compassion when he speaks of simple steps to peace and he believes peace is in every step so long as we are aware of our steps (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1991). Peace, according to this writer, is already present. It is not something to be sought after or attained but rather it is developed. Mindful awareness of life creates universal peace. Within this framework peace is a compassionate awareness of life.

Mindfulness meditation has been a vehicle utilized by Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn as founder of the Stress Reduction Clinic, University of Massachusetts, in his clinical healing practices and mind-body research. He writes extensively about an awareness which surpasses thought and which awakens us to the richness of the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). In an emphasis on present awareness, he counters physical and psychological stress which intuitively presents as the antitheses of the peaceful experience. Meditative practices have been explored by sages, yogis and Zen masters for thousands of years and remain foremost amongst present day strategies directed at enlightenment and peace. Kabat-Zinn's specific emphasis on present day awareness and attentiveness to life's moments is in keeping with my own thesis that raising awareness of peaceful moments in our lives promotes health and well-being.

We all strive for a peaceful existence but how we move toward it has to do with what we take it to be. Journey and destination appear intimately intertwined. Contemporaries point us in peaceful directions and in doing so touch on attitudes, virtues, spirituality, responsibility of choice and surrender to divine intervention. In addition they teach that peaceful existence has something to do with being mindful of a moment in time. Repeated themes of love, compassion and spiritual journey become integrated into a composite of peace and lend support to the thesis that inner peace is like a beautiful basket with many fruits and blossoms held within.

Qualitatively Different Moments In Time

This study centers on a particular kind of qualitatively different moment in life; the peaceful moment. Other researchers and authors have studied or made reference to moments in time that, like peaceful moments, appear to have special significance in a lifetime of moments. Peak and pyramid experience, mystical and religious experience, dark nights of the soul, authentic moments and stillpoints are briefly discussed as significant periods or moments in time that, like the peaceful moment, have identifiable characteristics.

Peak and Pyramid Experience

Abrahm Maslow is credited with the expansion of the field of psychological inquiry to include the study of optimal psychological health and well-being (Cleary and Shapiro, 1995; Maslow, 1971, 1977). In a movement away from 'sickness-focussed' study Maslow chose to research self-actualized individuals, considered to be advanced along the hierarchy of developmental needs. His studies encompassed peak experiences described as "the most ecstatic, joyous, happiest, blissful moments in one's life" (Maslow, 1971, pp. 174, 175). When studying self-actualized individuals he noted accounts of mystical, oceanic experiences and recorded that these are special moments, rare in some lives and frequent in others (Maslow 1977, pp. 59-68). He also came across reports of transcendent experiences and expanded states of consciousness beyond conventional ego boundaries.

Maslow observed that individuals who had experienced transcendent forms of peak experience, valued them as a most important part of their lives. He categorized many of these peak experiences as transcendent states of consciousness. In his study of the nature of transcendent states of consciousness, Maslow introduced the notion of a state of serenity or relaxation and awareness of the present moment as key elements in the process of spiritual self-development (Krippner, 1972; Maslow, 1971, 1977). In the last two years of his life, Maslow began to modify his view of optimal states of consciousness to reflect this new element of serenity as essential for a more lasting experience of transcendence to occur. In sharp contrast to an element of excitability characteristic of the peak experience, serenity became a distinctive component of what he came to call the plateau experience. Maslow's enthusiastic study of plateau experience came to a halt with his death. The component of serenity which Maslow introduced into his work and sadly left incomplete may see a re-birth of sorts in terms of my current study.

Mystical and Religious Experience

The adjective, mystical, is technically applied most often to states that are of brief duration (James, 1985). William James, in his classic studies on religious experience, sought to understand the essence of religious and mystical states through historical studies and typical case examples. He comments that we have alternating seasons of lively and difficult faith. For example, we may have ordinary experiences and then a crisis or something occurs and a more direct vision of truth is upon us. He describes the characteristics of mystical states as: ineffability (no adequate report of its contents can be given in words, something like states of feeling), noetic quality (states of knowledge), transiency (cannot be sustained too long); passivity (preliminary voluntary operations may occur but ultimately there is a sense that one's will is in abeyance and that a higher power takes over). According to James, "We pass into mystical states from out of ordinary consciousness as from a less into a more, as from a smallness into a vastness and, at the same time, as from an unrest to a rest. We feel them as reconciling, unifying states" (p. 330).

James refers to a Canadian psychiatrist, Dr. Bucke, in his discussions stating that Bucke gives the more distinctly characterized of these mystical phenomenon the name of cosmic consciousness. Bucke's description of cosmic consciousness includes the prime feature of consciousness of the life and order of the universe. Encompassed in the experience is intellectual enlightenment, a new plane of existence, a state of moral exaltation, an indescribable feeling of elevation and a sense of immortality.

James (1985) relates typical mystical experience cases in first-person story form when presenting his classic study of religious experience. For the purposes of my inquiry, James' exemplary analysis served as a methodological guideline in addition to providing insights which are valuable for this study of personal peace. As such, I make reference to James throughout this document.

Dark Moments and Fire in the Soul

In the current study peaceful moments are a focal point. Moments of a darker kind have also been identified as sufficiently unique to warrant being the center of focus. For example, Borysenko (1993) who talks of spiritual optimism and growth through adversity, refers to 'dark nights of the soul', a term first used by Spanish mystic, St. John of the Cross, in the mid-1500s. From her perspective, dark nights of the soul (moments of deep suffering) are opportunities for personal growth and spiritual homecoming. Can peace be found resting in dark nights of the soul?

Borysenko also describes Moments of Wholeness or Holy Moments stating that during these times we feel joy, peace, security, unity, harmony, love, sacredness and a vibrant sense of aliveness. In these moments we are said to be in touch with our own true nature.

Authentic Experience and Real Moments

Authentic experience and real moments are specific times in life that have been identified as having unique features. In this way they are like peaceful moments which also enjoy a particular significance in a lifetime of moments. Rahilly (1993) undertook a phenomenological analysis of authentic experience and identified mutually exclusive necessary constituents of the experience. These were as follows: intensity of emotion (usually expressed using hyperbolic language), a significantly heightened awareness of somatic experience, a sense of being fully present and aware of self, and a heightened awareness of others involved in the particular situation being experienced (p. 65). Rogers (1961) identified four qualities of becoming a person as: an openness to experience, trust in one's organism, an internal locus of evaluation and willingness to be a 'process'. Rahilly found these features to be present in all of her co-researchers during their authentic experience. Rahilly reiterates that an experience is no less authentic for being negative in nature.

'Real moments' have been described by psychologist and writer, De Angeles (1995). She speaks of real moments in the context of a love relationship indicating that they occur when you are focussed on the object of your love and on the love experienced between you. Real moments give depth and meaning to a relationship. She indicates that it is in the timelessness and simplicity of a real moment that peace is created and found. Real moments transform relationships into healing sanctuaries free of burden and obligation. From this perspective a real moment is an authentic experience between two loving individuals and has something to do with a sense of peace in relationship.

Stillpoints

Ronna Jevne, professor at the University of Alberta, writer and researcher has focussed on the counselling process in her academic endeavors. She discusses the concept of 'stillpoint' and its relationship to counselling (Jevne, 1988). She promotes counselling for a stillpoint before attempting problem solving. In defining stillpoint, she refers to Antovsky's "sense of coherence" (p.1). A stillpoint is not synonymous with being quiet, calm or objective but rather "allows a person to span the breadth of feelings and the range of reactions." She continues, that with a stillpoint, energy is used efficiently, not on worrying, and there is a sense of strength and purpose. "The absence of judgement, the awareness of 'now' and the appreciation of what it means to experience the full range of human condition are part of the stillpoint" (p. 8). From this perspective, stillpoint and a peaceful moment may share common characteristics.

Jevne emphasizes that the helper's connection with his or her own stillpoint is the foundation of effectiveness in working with people in distress. She believes that, "The first stillpoint to attend to is one's own" (p. 8). This gives rise to the question of the need for personal peace in understanding the experience of peace in others.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the meaning of personal peace has been explored in a dialogue with existent views on the topic. Through exploration of its semantic field the concept of peace and closely related terms were explored. Ideals of peace were discussed from a historical perspective with reference to dominant religious traditions. Views of peace as cessation (negative) and as fulfillment (positive) were presented. The question of whether peace is always a desirable state was introduced. Traditional images of peace provided insights on how peace has been represented through the ages. Views of celebrated authors were presented in relation to attainment of personal peace.

From their writings can be gleaned insights into meaningful aspects of the phenomenon. Finally, significant moments in life, previously identified by researchers and writers, were presented.

What is apparent from an initial investigation of the literature related to the experience of peacefulness is that it rarely appears by its own name under the category of psychology. More often it is embedded within philosophical or religious writings. When it does appear it is spoken of as though we all understand what it means, we just don't know how to acquire it. From my investigation of available literature, the concept has not enjoyed systematic research as an experience in its own right. It is my intent to take a step back and to study the phenomenon of peacefulness using first person accounts of the experience. From within the experience itself may be gleaned practical approaches to its attainment.

The concept of personal peace appears to enjoy a spiritual quality. Though this makes it harder to capture, in the sense of focus for study, the importance of this longed for human experience makes the challenge worthwhile. From extant literature it is intimately intertwined with psychological health and is a most desired state. As such, peacefulness has a rightful place within the conceptual understandings of psychology and pedagogical practices.

CHAPTER THREE

A PATHWAY TO 'PEACEFILLED' UNDERSTANDINGS

Becoming Familiar with the Pathway

This qualitative study employs methods that belong to phenomenology, hermeneutics and narrative inquiry. What is held in common is that these methodologies are all interpretive thus guiding my interpretive work. In this chapter I discuss the methodological choice and present theoretical assumptions from phenomenology, hermeneutics and narrative inquiry which guide the research. In addition, I indicate the specific research activities undertaken and strategies utilized for ensuring 'goodness' of the research. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations relevant to the study.

The Methodological Choice

> *I seek a peaceful methodology without manipulation or control, one that respects the uncertainty that is life. The method of choice must not represent the antithesis of peace itself.*
>
> (Journal entry, June, 1997)

In selecting a research methodology upon which to base the method of the study, of foremost consideration is its potential capacity to illuminate the phenomenon of interest. The research design, within a qualitative paradigm, is developed to explicate the essentials of the particular experience being studied. In this study the design was emergent to allow full reception of rich material which often availed itself in the most unexpected ways. As such it was important to espouse a theoretical philosophy that honored change and stood sound in the face of indeterminacy.

Doing research was an 'awesome' consideration when I first entered graduate school seven years ago. The title 'researcher' was almost fearsome as it conjured up visions of the mad scientist revered as expert, working in solitude, removed from mundane everyday matters. Seeking the highest standard of objectivity, the imagined researcher isolated not only the thing under study but his or her own values so as not to contaminate the pure truth of the matter. A natural science perspective tended to dominate my impression of what a researcher looked like.

My image of a researcher has evolved along with my understanding of human science research and qualitative research methodologies. Philosophical and methodological perspectives pertaining to qualitative research have been put forth by many (Berg, 1989; Colaizzi, 1978; Giorgi, 1985; Kvale, 1986; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Osborne, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988; Shapiro, 1986; van Manen, 1990; Wertz, 1986). Human science acknowledges that persons are inextricably attached to the world and that knowledge and truth are created in the human lifeworld. As such, subjective reality is honored because it is impossible to separate person from world. Reality is seen to lie within human consciousness and to have temporal and historic contexts (Ricoeur, 1981, 1983). This means that what is taken to be truth or reality is not static or unchanging but rather it exists within the context of a particular time and place in the stream of history.

The researcher image that I had many years ago was naive in its exclusion of a different kind of researcher. In my new image the researcher still spends much time in isolation reading, studying and writing. As my understanding of science has expanded, I accept the need for rigor while embracing the appropriateness of researcher qualities such as capacity to honor everyday events, to be immersed in life as lived and to respond with empathy to others.

Wilber (1996), in his discussion of art and literary interpretation, points out that multidimensional analysis privileges no single context and invites us to be unendingly open to new horizons. He suggests that each theory is part of a nested series of truths and that each is true when highlighting its own context but false when it tries to deny reality or to give no significance to other existing contexts. These insights helped me to understand that it is not a matter of right or wrong in terms of a choice of methodology upon which to base this research study and added justification for taking an eclectic approach. My choice has been ultimately based on what is appropriate for this study, conducted by this specific researcher at this given moment in time.

Personal peace is about quality of life in that it speaks of value and meaning in lived experience. From my perspective, it is best studied from within a family of methodologies that chooses not to measure, to isolate, to categorize or to become overly concerned with mastering an elusive truth. Because I perceive personal peace and quality of life to be related, qualitative methodologies are best suited to studying personal peace.

Within the qualitative family of methodologies I have been influenced by the literature of hermeneutics, phenomenology and narrative inquiry as I approached the question of peacefulness. This study does not strictly adhere to one method or another. Broadly speaking my interest is phenomenological. I ask the question, "What is the lived experience of peacefulness"? As Wilber (1996) suggested there are truths nested in the historical stream of lived experience. My interest is in seeking deep meanings of the phenomenon of peacefulness, some of which may be more invariant than others, however tentative or provisional these meanings may be. Hermeneutics guides the interpretive process and the understanding that there are many interpretations to a text. The influence of narrative inquiry is apparent in the use of biographic participant accounts and in the inclusion of autobiographical content. The manner in which the persons to the research are situated in the text, and the form of presentation is compatible with narrative inquiry methods. The use of story as embodiment of lived experience is also compatible with both phenomenological and narrative methods of inquiry.

Assumptions Guiding My Interpretive Work

I accept the assumption that, in seeking knowledge, the primary source of understanding is the life world of the individual (Giorgi, 1985; Valle and King, 1978). I also align myself with social scientists whose work is oriented by interpretive methods (Berg, 1989; Bruner, 1986; Collaizzi, 1978; Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Polkinghorne, 1988; van Manen, 1990). These authors recognize that there is no neutral vantage point from which to reveal a truth. According to J. Bruner (1986) we cannot know another's experience; the best we can do is interpret it. The distinction between phenomenology as pure description of lived experience and hermeneutics as interpretation of experience through text or some symbolic form, becomes blurred in the consideration that "When we interpret the meaning of something we actually interpret an interpretation" (Gadamer, 1986, p. 68). A story told is an interpretation both in its telling and in its receiving. Words pass through a veil of meaning which is derived from personal and collective experience.

As van Manen (1990) indicates, phenomenology is descriptive in the sense that it names something and it is interpretive in that it mediates between interpreted meanings and the thing toward which the interpretation points. From this perspective, as a researcher, I am engaged in both describing the phenomenon of being at peace and interpreting what it means to be at peace.

Our knowledge of the world is gained from our experience of it and in this research the concern is with the meaning of lived experience. Meanings are always an interpretation of something and thus the methodological terms 'hermeneutic' and 'phenomenology' are often seen together. Hermeneutic phenomenology, which attends to both terms of its methodology, questions the taken-for-grantedness found in our understandings of certain human phenomena (van Manen, 1990). Those experiences which often are ignored as simply pedestrian are the life blood of human experience research, from this perspective. Giorgi (1985) indicates that, "The life-world is the everyday world as it is lived by all of us prior to explanations and theoretical interpretations of any kind" (p. 99). The life-world includes emotions, motivations, symbols and their meaning, empathy and other subjective aspects associated with the naturally evolving lives of individuals (Berg, 1989). From this perspective it includes both conscious and unconscious content.

Perhaps more than anyone else, Victor Frankl (1959, 1978), in his life story of finding meaning and purpose while in a concentration camp, has taught us that we are free to experience life as we choose because the meaning we give to life comprises our experience of it. This opens up a world of possibility. From the perspective of researcher it would be easy to get lost in the deep sea of multiplicity of experience having only unrelated, never ending bits of meaning floating about beyond the grasp. How does it become possible to articulate meaning; to describe a possible human experience in a meaningful way?

Phenomenological interpretation espouses the belief that we share elements of experience that provide some common ground upon which to empathically relate. Though each experience is individual and will not be factually replicable, it may be meaningfully replicable. In this way we share our humanity and, from the perspective of researcher, it becomes possible to study and articulate meaning.

For the phenomenologist, meanings exist in experience as deep structures of intersubjective reality and it is these themes of experience that the researcher seeks. A theme is a phrase or statement that captures a meaning in the flow of experience (van Manen, 1990). The words, "in the flow" suggest that, to some extent, discernible meanings exist in the context of change, some of which may be more invariant (or less changing) than others over time or across cultures. With reference to researching peacefulness, I seek to describe in words, underlying deep meanings of the phenomenon which are more invariant than other dimensions and without which the phenomenon would not be what it is. In addition, other more variant aspects which contribute to meaning may also be of significance in a holistic apprehension of the phenomenon.

Van Manen recently suggested that personal peace may be an example of a human experience that is so multileveled, multifaceted that it seems hard to find an overriding thematic core (personal communication, July 2, 1999). He indicated that, despite this consideration, some of the aspects of meaning that become apparent can likely be considered more invariant or shared amongst people who experience moments of peacefulness, than other aspects. He added that other dimensions of meaning may vary and may sometimes be associated with the experience of peacefulness but do not necessarily belong to the more invariant dimension of it. Van Manen reminds that whatever distinctions we make are always tentative and incomplete because when we speak of human experiences these can't be described in a definitive manner. He indicated, "It is the nature of human science research that it is interpretive, no one has the last word." Nonetheless, he explains, that when we try to make sense of things we attempt to explore what meanings seem distinctive of a certain phenomenon, and how these meanings differ and vary.

In the current study I seek to describe the meaning of the phenomenon of peacefulness which is another way of asking, "How is personal peace experienced"? To know the true nature of something would mean to look so deeply into its heart that its very pulse of being is purely and simply apprehended. Clairvoyance would surely be a prerequisite! Human science researchers are not clairvoyants but they have made attempts at 'seeing more clearly' the objects of their study. In the history of hermeneutic phenomenology, Heidegger's philosophy broke with the traditional conception of truth as an unchanging and objective set of facts and replaced it with the notion of the historicity of truth: human beings do not have an unchanging nature so much as a changing history and thus what we call truth is, in important ways, historically situated (Gadamer, 1975; Heidegger, 1962). We come to understand the historicity of truth not so much through scientific empiricism but rather through interpretation.

Rather than grappling with the dilemma of celebrating the real world of subjective experience while seeking to disengage from it, one response has been to overcome the opposition of subject-object by accepting the hermeneutical or interpretive character of existence. Hermeneutics originated in the interpretive study of biblical texts but has found application in the study of human behavior using a text analogy.

As van Manen points out (1990) the notion of textuality becomes a fruitful device for analyzing meaning and reminding us that there are multiple interpretations of text. Life may be like a text but it is not identical to text. But like a text, life is ambiguous (personal communication, July 2, 1999). The interpretive character of experience thus lies at the heart of any hermeneutic endeavor. We may come to know or understand a thing better through human science research but in the end, as van Manen points out, "It is always a human puzzle" (1999).

Polkinghorne (1988) has emphasized that the study of human beings by human sciences needs to focus on the realm of meaning in general and on narrative in particular. By narrative he means any written or spoken presentation. The narrative paradigm asserts that narrative is the primary form through which humans construct the dimensions of their life's meaningfulness and understand its significance (E. Bruner, 1986; Clandinin and Connelly, 1994; Epston and White, 1992; Geertz, 1986; Iser, 1978; Ricoeur, 1981). As these authors indicate, narrative theory holds that human existence takes place and is figured by a linguistic milieu. According to Ricoeur (1981) experience and consciousness are structured like a language, and therefore one could speak of all human experience and interaction as some kind of text.

I recognize that when people wish to share their experiences with me they tell me a story about that experience. Of story, Clandinin and Connelly (1998) indicate, "Stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell of our experience. A story has a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history" (p. 155). Polkinghorne (1988) in his version of narrative theory, underlines the importance of having research strategies that can work with the narratives people use to understand the human world" (p. xi). Clandinin and Connelly (in press) make the similar point that, because we understand the world narratively, it makes sense to study the world narratively.

Narrative thinking is considered to be a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about experience, according to Clandinin and Connelly (in press). In their most recent work these authors explore what it means to think narratively by exploring the intellectual territory of other ways of thinking (reductionistic and formalistic) and defining five 'tensions' at the boundary of their own way (narrative) of thinking. For the purposes of this study the tensions, indicated as temporality, people, action, certainty and context, offer one (albeit much abbreviated) way of understanding the phenomenon of narrative. As such a condensed version of their discussion follows.

In narrative inquiry temporality is a central feature. It is taken for granted that locating things in time is a way of thinking about them. Any event or thing has a past, a present and an implied future. From this perspective things are seen in time as opposed to seeing things as they are.

In looking at a way of thinking about people, it is taken for granted in narrative thought that people are in a process of change and it is thus important to narrate the person in terms of process. It thus becomes important to the context of meaning to know something about the person.

In narrative thinking an action is seen as a narrative sign. The implication is that it is necessary to interpret that sign before meaning can be attached to it and this involves narrative histories which rest between action and meaning. Contrary to other modes of thought, action is not taken as directly evidential.

The issue of certainty was also central to the authors' discussion on narrative thinking. There is a sense of tentativeness and a kind of uncertainty about the meaning of an event. The attitude is one of doing the *best* one can under the circumstance with the understanding that other interpretations and other ways of explaining things are always a possibility.

Context is an important consideration in narrative thinking as it is considered to be ever present. Context is necessary for making sense of any person, place or thing. In narrative thinking the person in context is of prime interest. From this assertion, narrative thinking is not congruent with a taxonomy that can be applied in all contexts.

In earlier writings the above authors have clarified understandings of narrative inquiry (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994, 1998). The assumption of narrative inquiry is that people lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives. Narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied as well as the patterns of inquiry for its study. For the sake of distinction and in keeping with reasonably well-established practice, the above authors refer to the phenomenon as 'story' and the inquiry as 'narrative'. Narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them and write narratives of experience (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994; Epston and White, 1992). From this assumption an inquiry is conceptualized as a storied one which involves telling the stories, re-telling the stories and experiencing the experiences of the stories. What emerges is a new story which represents collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research proceeds.

A narrative paradigm for research places credibility on the story as revealed by the one who is expert of his or her own experience. Narrative thinking encompasses the notion that one has experiences that are one's own. Thus personal voice and biographic self are significant to narrative research texts. This emphasis is different than in phenomenology whereby the shared voice of humanity (phenomenological "I" or "we") is the focal point. As Clandinin and Connelly (in press) point out, narrative inquiries tend to begin with personal experiences in story form as opposed to theories. According to these authors, the researchers' autobiographically oriented narratives that are relevant to the research question, are often seen in the introduction of the research text (as well as throughout the inquiry).

Narrative emphasizes relationship (Bateson, 1994) and is a process of collaboration much like a friendship (Clandinin and Connelly, in press) as the voices of researcher, participants and audience to the research join in the new story of the research text. Narrative inquiry entails a reconstruction of a person's experience in relation to others and to the social milieu. In writing 'I' into the research text, Clandinin and Connelly remind us that it is important to convey a sense of social significance whereby 'I' connects with 'they'.

Narrative research as a frame of reference, opens up previously inaccessible areas for investigation. As with phenomenology, narrative inquiry honors the hermeneutical character of existence and thus hermeneutics provides a framework for interpretation of narratives of experience. The question of whether a story is fact or fiction is somehow less relevant than the investment one has in its telling. It is the personal meaning a story has for the teller or the listener that creates its relevancy. The distinction is that a story is not a life. Life is the performance of text (Bruner, 1986).

The interpretive character of phenomenology, hermeneutics and narrative research methodologies links the emergent eclectic approaches of this study. Hermeneutics lies at the heart of any human science endeavor. This research text is like a peaceful meeting ground of personal and communal voices each having made a significant contribution. In the meeting place of the text a multiperspectival approach to understanding personal peace unfolds allowing expanded horizons for viewing the phenomenon.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

In researching lived experience it is important to avoid any tendency to construct a predetermined set of fixed procedures, techniques and concepts that would rule-govern the research. Nonetheless, as van Manen points out there is a "*methodos* - a way" (van Manen, 1990, p. 29). Though there is a path leading to a clearing, a place where some 'thing' can be seen more clearly, the paths (methods) cannot be determined by fixed signposts. The following represents the series of activities which were undertaken in enlightening the phenomenon of personal peace.

Pilot Project

The seeds of this study were planted four years ago. At that time I engaged in a project on being at peace while taking a research course instructed by Dr. Max van Manen. Initial requests for peaceful moment stories resulted in rich verbal and written accounts. Peaceful moments seemed to be very accessible to participants and to almost 'come alive' with vivid detail. From this exercise I became convinced that I could study personal peace by searching the content of stories. In addition, I experimented with specific data collection techniques and exercises by applying these to a ready-made group who were available through my teaching of a course through Continuing Education on personal peace. Having noted what facilitated the most powerful expressions of peace, I made the necessary revisions.

Becoming a Researcher

A Personal Worldview

My choice of methodology was not taken lightly. For myself it was important that I was comfortable with the beliefs inherent in the guiding philosophy of the research methodology which directed the methods and employed. This involved self-reflection related to my personal worldview. Recollection of an experience during graduate studies facilitated clarification of personal beliefs.

In a class brainstorming session, over a hundred words were identified which had some connection with counselling theory, therapy and values. We were asked to select three words that carried the most meaning for us. I selected the words 'Spirit', 'Ground' and 'Life'. The words have stood the test of time as I reflect on their unwavering significance in my life story. Like an essence of my being, they provide a framework for my thoughts and actions.

The word 'Spirit' has multiple meanings for me including the fire and soul within a person. It represents courage in the face of adversity and a zest for life. It speaks of the essence of being and the capacity to transcend one's personhood. Spirit allows me to remain open to possibility and to say, "Anything is possible." Spirit gives credibility to what cannot be known through the senses. Spirituality is about faith and immortality. Where spirit resides there is no emptiness. I think of mist and fog and shadowy entities which fill me with mystery and wonder. Spirit is about that which I do not know. There is an intangible, elusive quality associated with spirit.

The word 'Ground' brings with it the smell and feel of the damp, cool earth. It connects me to nature and gives me balance. It enters my repertoire as a close opposite to spirit in its return from celestial to terrestrial. I think how important it is that the soil is rich and solid for healthy growth and for venturing forth. To say that someone is the salt of earth is, for me, the greatest compliment. Ground as foundation is important and I like to feel the earth beneath my feet. I believe that there is a reality which exists even if I am not there to perceive it into existence. I have no power of creation though I may bend and shape reality to my liking. The fabric of the earth is still there no matter how I cut the cloth. Like variations on a theme, the theme provides us with some universal comprehensible representation; some common ground upon which to share our humanity.

Though heaven and earth both present themselves in my chosen meaningful words, they touch one another and together form 'Life', which is the third word that I chose. Spirit is life and it is, in itself, the essence just as ground is essence. When you breathe life into something you are giving it soul. I think how we only have one life to live and how every moment of it is a precious gift. I think how I value the lives of my children. My heart swells when my son make a goal in soccer or my daughters offer a hand in kindness to someone. The little things in my life *are* my life. I believe that the substance of 'Life' is everyday experience.

Three words have provided the framework for an examination of my personal philosophy. No doubt their significance in my life has influenced me to study personal peace which speaks to me of life and spirit and a safe ground. The activity of making my personal worldview explicit allowed me to know myself better and from the standpoint of *becoming researcher* contributes to the soundness of the research. Hirsch (1967) has emphasized the importance of knowing something about the author when determining the validity of textual interpretations in hermeneutic endeavors.

Naming Pre-understandings

Sensitivity to my own presuppositions helps me to avoid the pitfalls of imposing my values upon others' stories. For example, the words 'Ground', 'Spirit' and 'Life' have been identified as key meaning words for myself. I like people who share my values and I might even give them more credibility than those who see things very differently. For the purpose of this study, I will take care not to exclude participants who impress as less than grounded, who lack spirituality or who tend to show little joy in life. As a further example, my belief in God should not mean that I focus solely on religious peace and so on.

'Bracketing' is the name given to the process of putting aside one's presuppositions to allow for clearer vision in apprehending the phenomenon (Giorgi, 1985; Husserl, 1970). As Merleau-Ponty (1986) reminds us, our knowledge of the world is gained from our particular point of view or from some experience of the world. From this perspective it is not possible to separate the person from his or her theories nor is it prudent to try. As with most seeming dichotomies, there is usually a point between the tensions which presents as a reasonable position to take. I have noted how explicating my worldview has helped me to avoid certain pitfalls in terms of prejudicing selection of participants. In like manner I believe that by being more cognizant of my own stories of personal peace I can seek out stories that are both similar (for empathic generalizability) and different (for variety of experience). To seek the ideal of being able to see 'eye to eye' with another's life story (in order to understand and report it) involves both the capacity to empathize through shared sentiment and to disengage sufficiently to remain true to their version of lived experience.

With regard to bracketing my pre-understandings of peace, my initial thoughts on the phenomenon and existing views in literature have been indicated in the first two chapters of this research text. At this time I also make clear that, as a therapist, I counsel individuals who are struggling with an absence of personal peace. I apply techniques which involve attitudinal change, identification of meaning and purpose, mindfulness meditation and imagery and relaxation in an effort to replace inner turmoil with personal peace. The activities of this research project have influenced my therapeutic practice. There is no reason to doubt that my perceptions of what constitutes peace*lessness* from experiences in therapy, will likewise influence my view of what constitutes peaceful experience and how best to promote it in others. I perceive this information, which is gleaned from the lifestories of others, as largely contributing to, rather than detracting from, my ability to look deeply into the phenomenon of peacefulness.

Becoming Available to Receive

In addition to intentionally seeking data through specific sources, in 'becoming researcher' I have attempted to be as open as possible to information presented spontaneously which might contribute to my understanding of the phenomenon. As such I engaged in activities which would keep me open to receive. I took photographs of subjects that presented as peaceful to myself and I intentionally became more mindful of what was occurring around me. In addition I questioned times of distress from the perspective of "How is this different from peace"? and "What can I do right now to be open to peace"?.

At a professional level, as a psychologist in private practice I invited clients to talk about moments of peace as part of the healing process. In addition, I recently was involved in a hospital based chronic lung disease clinic, where I provide a psychological component to outpatients, specifically focussed on attaining peace as part of a holistic health picture. From these group encounters over 60 individuals (not participants in this research) have shared their stories and thoughts on personal peace over a period of three years. These 'peacefilled' encounters have enriched my understanding and have, in many instances, been a springboard for a specific research query or activity.

Selecting Informants

Participants were selected for their ability to access and report the particular phenomenon under investigation. According to Becker (1986), a basic qualification for participants is that they have salient experiences of the phenomenon in their everyday worlds. Though it would be reasonable to assume that some people have achieved a greater level of personal peace than others, this would not preclude receiving submissions from others who experience moments of peace less often. The main qualifying criterion was that the individual had experienced peacefulness on at least one occasion in his or her lifetime. The prompt, "Can you recall a peaceful moment in your life"?, brought forth a peaceful moment story in all instances which is testimony to the presence of the experience in everyday lives. From this perspective everyone is a potential participant. The nature of this interpretive inquiry requires an openness on the part of the participants to share their experiences with the researcher.

Ability to articulate a story of a peaceful moment (in written or spoken form) and to do so without an analytic flavor to the story, were important considerations. Although anyone could submit a story, not all stories were used in the research. If the storyteller's text was more general than it was specific or analytical without specific examples of personal experience, the story was not included in the pool for thematization.

In searching for participants, volunteers were solicited through word of mouth, referrals from other participants, postings at local supermarkets and at the University, newspaper advertisements (three advertisements in local paper) and personal invitation (persons whom I encountered or heard of who might add variety by age or circumstance). In the case of personal invitations for example, I invited one individual because I had heard of his experience of peace during a near death encounter and another because of her seeking peace with a serious medical condition. Ultimately stories as exemplars were selected which were rich in detail and description, though all stories ultimately contributed to a better understanding of the phenomenon. Participants can be divided into two groups. Those that participated individually and those who took part in group activities.

Individual Participants

These are the men and women and a few children who submitted stories of peaceful moments to add to a large pool of stories (75 in total). They are a heterogeneous group by gender, age, culture, life work, economic status and personal circumstances. Variation in circumstances was intentionally sought to provide multiple perspectives from which to view the phenomenon of peace. Differences amongst participants are considered to be an asset to illumination of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990; Wertz, 1986). Diversity in sources of data, techniques and strategies not only allows the 'multisplendid' nature of peace to present itself but adds rigor and depth to the study. Such triangulation of data has been recognized as contributing to the stability of research findings (Bibby, 1993; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 1987). Submissions were gathered (written and verbal) over an extensive period of time which resulted in an opportunity to supplement more random submissions (from postings, newspaper advertisements) with invited submissions in order to vary the nature of the participant group. All individuals met with myself briefly for signing of ethics release forms. I was therefore made aware of demographic circumstances. Some met for longer periods of time and supplemented written submissions by invitation or out of their own expressed desire to do so.

Group Participants

Two independent groups of people participated in this research project.

Seminar Group: This group is comprised of six individuals, three men and three women, who enrolled in a seminar taught by myself through Continuing Education and who agreed to be participants in the research project (an earlier seminar group had agreed to pilot the project). Participants ranged in age from 25 to 67 years of age and were employed in a variety of occupations; computer programmer, police officer, mechanic, housewife, musician and part-time teacher. They came together in their mutual interest of seeking peace in their lives. They were focussed on advancing well-being as opposed to presenting with any clinically significant problems.

Focus Group: This group is comprised of six women volunteers, one of whom acted as my assistant. Cecile Caswell (who gave permission to be identified) assisted in terms of recruiting participants, volunteering her country home as a context for the meeting, setting up audio material and writing supplies, modelling interactive process and providing helpful insights as to group dynamics following the meeting. Unlike the seminar group, the focus group was intentionally homogeneous in its make-up having only women members. The participants were purposively solicited by myself and my assistant. Between us we invited five women whom we believed would be comfortable with one another, who were neither overly timid or overbearing and who we deemed had a personal quality that would allow them to speak not only from their heads but from their hearts. None of the women were close friends though two had met before. The women ranged in age from 36 to 52 years and all were mothers. Four of the six women were employed outside the home in a variety of occupations. Three did volunteer work on a regular basis.

Though restricting membership to women was not the original intent, the individuals available on the meeting date were all women. An earlier focus group which included three men had to be cancelled unexpectedly and later, when re-grouping, the male volunteers were unavailable. A decision was made to hold a women's group. This contributed to triangulation because the seminar group was heterogeneous in makeup and having a homogeneous group added a component of variety between groups. Becker (1986) indicates that making the group as homogeneous as possible helps to articulate the essential structure of the phenomenon. Morgan (1993) emphasizes that, when selecting participants for a focus group, it is important to ask, "How easy will it be to generate a free-flowing and productive conversation on this topic"? (p. 13). In consideration of group dynamics, similarities can enhance the comfort level of participants, increase empathic sharing and result in a greater depth of material.

Gathering Peace

Stories were submitted in written or spoken form. In the case of the latter, stories were audio-taped and transcribed for thematic analysis. Journal entries and research notes supplemented written and audiotaped stories. Data was collected both individually and in a group context which increased the variety-centered rigor and groundedness of the study. For clarification and simplicity, data collection activities are organized under four main headings: Story, Symbols of Peace, Individual Submissions and The Group Experience.

Story

The study really begins with an event in mind; an interior perception, feeling, impulse, concept, idea or vision. This event was intentionally queued in participants by myself asking the question, "Can you recall a peaceful moment in your life"? In structured settings the question was asked just prior to pre-planned periods of writing. This strategy was employed to keep the experience as close to the original 'vision' of it as possible. Individuals were encouraged to recount the first event that came to mind. In the circumstance that more than one event was triggered, I would suggest they choose or submit multiple stories, independently written. Participants were asked to describe, in as much detail as possible, the singular event (sights, sounds, smells, actions, thoughts, feelings) without analyzing it. Story has more power in research when it offers no causal explanations or interpretive generalizations (Merleau-Ponty, 1986).

A story was told rather than written when the participant preferred to do so or upon invitation by myself for clarification or elaboration. Conversation was ongoing with peers and individuals who offered insights from personal experience. Data from these sources, when deemed enhancing to the study, was either recorded as research notes or audiotaped and transcribed. In the case of group experience, significant material was audio-taped and transcribed for thematic analysis.

The centrality of the researcher's own narratives of experience provide referents to understanding what is happening (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994) and are an important starting point for the phenomenological researcher because one's own experiences are also the possible experiences of others (van Manen, 1990). My own stories of peaceful moments were thus recruited from memory, somehow presenting themselves in a carefully preserved state. I could 'see' the whole peaceful scene once again as though watching myself engaged in the experience. I wondered if the overwhelming tenderness and love for life that shook my composure as I wrote were 'then feelings now' as though there was no such thing as time.

Secondary to peaceful moment stories, other stories of peace supplemented and enriched data. For example, a group exercise which involved identifying exemplars of peace was also utilized to add depth to discourse. In this exercise participants were asked to identify someone in their life whom they considered to be an exemplar of a peaceful person. They were then asked to write a full description of the person including what it was about the individual that resulted in their choice. My original intent was to include a chapter on exemplars of peace in this dissertation, not realizing how rich and plentiful the data would be on peaceful moment stories. As the research progressed, I realized that I had an excess of data and would not be including the chapter on exemplars in my dissertation. Nonetheless the exercise facilitated group discussion on peace and enriched my understanding. The exemplar of peace data awaits specific focus at another time.

Symbols of Peace

Group participants were asked to bring several objects that they associated with personal peace to the meetings. They were asked to be as spontaneous as possible in their selection and to bring whatever presented itself as symbolic of their personal peace. Each participant was invited to produce his or her symbols one at a time and, while holding the symbol, to talk about its meaning. Questions such as, "How is this symbol representative of your peace," were used as prompts. This exercise was audiotaped and transcribed. As with the 'Exemplars of Peace' exercise, symbols of peace were originally going to be used as raw data for thematic analysis. Because of the richness of data, which became apparent as the study progressed, I made a decision to focus primarily on the peaceful moment stories and surrounding dialogue. As such the 'Symbols of Peace' exercise assumed a secondary role of facilitating group discussion by queuing and deepening peaceful moment stories as shared in the group setting, and as supplementary data in the thematic analysis of peaceful moment stories. Clandinin and Connelly remind us that the little items we gather in our memoirs can be triggers to recollection around which we tell or retell our stories (in press). Researchers of depth psychology recognize the significance of symbolic content in achieving the depth dimension which is seen to encompass the vital force or 'elan vital' (Progoff, 1984).

Individual Submissions

Stories were gathered from individuals who engaged in private writings or who told their stories in an undisturbed prearranged setting. Individual writing exercises also took place within the context of group experience. Participants in the groups had an opportunity to be separate from their peers, writing in private, while experiencing the energy of the group. The individual nature of data collected has been amply described in the preceding text and is more the norm in terms of human science research than is a group approach. As such a more detailed account of the group activities follows.

The Group Experience

The effectiveness of group interview techniques in the social sciences has been demonstrated by several researchers (Frey and Carns, 1988, Frey and Fontana, 1991, Greenbaum, 1998, conducting effective focus groups; Lofland & Lofland, observing group encounters; Morgan, 1993, selection of research participants; Morgan and Spanish, 1985, researching health issues). Two independent groups formed the basis of a data collecting process which encompassed both group and individual activities.

Seminar Group

This group was ready-made in that the individuals (three men and three women) were attending one of three seminar groups that I had designed related to seeking personal peace. The course content was largely experiential. The students were contacted by the program coordinator and myself prior to commencement of the course to request permission to use class exercises for research purposes. Written consent forms were signed. The first exercise was the writing of peaceful moment stories. Participants were given approximately 15 minutes to write a story of one specific peaceful moment which occurred for them at any time in their life. They then were invited to share their stories in class. This allowed for verbal elaboration and observation of participant response. The last exercise (final night of group) involved symbols of peace, which were personal objects brought from home. The symbols were utilized as a group interview strategy to encourage personal accounts of peace and to draw out depth of peaceful moment stories. The latter exercise was audiotaped, transcribed and subsequently reviewed for meaningful personal experience content.

Because this was a course on peace I was aware that the content of my lecturettes might affect participant response. To prevent this from occurring the peaceful moment exercise took place prior to class content being delivered. With regard to the symbols of peace exercise, the lecture content which preceded it was related to practical ways to gain peace as opposed to being descriptive (attitudinal change strategies, mindfulness meditation, mind-body relationship and so on). For these reasons prior content was seen as having minimal influence on the data arising from the symbols of peace exercise.

Focus Group

Focus group, by definition, is a data gathering technique with the goal of collecting concentrated discussions on topics of interest to the researcher (Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1993). The classic use of focus group for research has been in the early stages of large survey research projects but, according to several sources, they need not be limited to preliminary exploration, being capable of standing alone (Frey and Fontana, 1991; Krueger, 1994; Morgan, 1997). The pairing of individual and group interviews for qualitative studies, which is similar to my approach to this inquiry, is considered to be a promising research area but has itself seen little research.

The idea of researching peacefulness within the context of a focus group appealed to me as a formal way of expanding the methodological tool kit, hearing from a larger number of participants about the topic and gathering a variety of views. Van Manen (1990) has noted that collaborative discussion or hermeneutic conversations may be helpful in generating deeper insights. Gadamer (1975) describes the method of conversational relations as the "art of testing" (p. 330). By this he means that in the conversational milieu there is an ongoing questioning of meaning, a constant thinking about the subject being studied. According to Lofland and Lofland (1995) group interviews can stimulate recall and opinion elaboration and bring participants closer to the truth through a process of group validation. In addition, focus groups provide a 'queuing' phenomenon that has potential to extract more information than other methods. As indicated by Frey and Fontana (1991) participants may identify language and symbols not previously acknowledged.

Additional benefits of a focus group approach included triangulation of data which was two fold in its capacity for variety and also for its cross-referencing function (Frey and Fontana, 1991). What this means, from the perspective of opinion oriented focus groups, is that ideas bounce back and forth and members can modify their opinion. This could be seen as a threat to validity in a research study however phenomenological intent is not to gain opinion but rather rich descriptions of personal experience. Consensus (as modified opinion) is sought only from the perspective of shared sentiment. Statements, such as "I know exactly what you mean" or "I remember a time when I felt like that," are consensual in the sense of shared empathic response. Rather than posing a threat to validity, consensual activity (for example, nodding, smiling, shedding tears in response to another's story, or the triggering of one's own story) which I will refer to as *empathic consensus* can be a measure of the shared elements of lived experience or, in phenomenological terms, be illuminating deep meanings of lived experience.

Several factors thus encouraged my use of focus group in studying peacefulness. From the perspective of person as researcher, my motives were somewhat less complex. I was attracted to the name 'focus' as an inspiration to gather up all the floating bits of information, find a center and settle peacefully into the pure comfort of simple focus.

Focus Group Format

The focus group, comprised of 6 women who were not previously involved, was organized around a 'soft' structure; flexible but with a definite shape to it. The umbrella topic, or focal point, was the phenomenon of peacefulness. Five subtopics provided a framework for discussion and analysis: peaceful moment stories, symbols of peace, exemplars of peace, a woman's peace, and open discussion. Open ended questions as probes, within specified subject areas, were indicated in the Focus Group Agenda Form which was used by myself as a guide during the three hour group experience. Within the structure indicated above, three methods of data collection were intertwined.

(1) Group Interview: This comprised the 'public', collaborative and interactive component of the focus group. Researcher interaction was limited to the application of open ended questions and to being a good listener and observer. Group meanings emerged with the introduction of questions such as, "How do you know when you are at peace? How does being a woman affect your peace (or does it)? What happens to that feeling of peace? How do you retrieve it? How long does the feeling last"?

(2) Individual Sharing in Group Context: This method was qualitatively different from the public discourse of the group interview in its speaker versus listener demarcation. It was a private-public discourse in that a singular participant became speaker while others listened without comment. The group format allotted times for reading and individual elaboration of written stories of peaceful moments and exemplars of peace. The readings allowed private sentiments and feelings, experienced during writing, to be shared. An empathic group climate of respectful listeners was established. Long silences were punctuated by shared emotions. This method encouraged depth in a supportive context and stimulated subsequent interactive discourse which became group interview material.

(3) Private Writing: This comprised the private component and involved participant engagement in independent writing exercises. Though a solitary involvement, the writing appeared to take on a group derived power as though energy flowed from one to the other seemingly unnoticed by the participants who were 'lost' in story writing.

Interpreting Story

Four research activities remain that are related to interpretation and description of data. These activities have been identified by van Manen as integral to researching lived experience (van Manen, 1990).

(1) Reflect on the themes which characterize the phenomenon. Reflection on lived experience is a thoughtful, reflective grasping of what gives a particular experience its significance. According to van Manen, in phenomenology, the distinction is made between essence and appearance. "The insight into the essence or meaning of a phenomenon involves a process of appropriating, of clarifying and of making explicit the structure of meaning of lived experience" (p. 77). Van Manen indicates that, in the use of

the word 'essence' it is important not to treat it as a positivistic notion (personal communication, March 10, 1999).

A theme represents one aspect of meaning of the phenomenon. Another way of saying this would be that it is a pattern of meaning. As van Manen points out (personal communication, 1999) there are many kinds of meanings, some of which are more invariant and others that are more variant. By invariant is meant less incidental and more necessary in terms of making a thing what it is. For example, there are some aspects to a chair that belong to a chair and without which a chair would no longer be experienced as a chair. By variant is meant those themes which may enrich the meanings but without which the phenomenon under study would remain what it is. For example, in using the chair as illustrative, one might consider the material it is made of to be a variant aspect of it.

In the current study one task has been to make distinctions between some of the multifaceted meanings that have emerged in an effort to discern which are more invariant to the phenomenon of peace and which are more variant and thus shared with other kinds of experiences that one would not call peaceful. For example, I might be daydreaming and this might be a relaxing experience sharing some of the same meaningful dimensions with peacefulness and yet one wouldn't say that the state of daydreaming is the same as peacefulness. The state of daydreaming might be a variant dimension. Peacefulness shares meaning with other kinds of experience and at times it seems almost to mean the same thing. For example, love and joy may share aspects of meaning with peacefulness yet there are certain aspects of meaning to each of these phenomenon that distinguish them from others and that makes each what it is.

In this study I try to orient myself to the experience of peacefulness; the lived experience that language attempts to grasp. One task, therefore, however tentative, incomplete and imperfect, has been to sort and make distinctions between some of those multifaceted meanings. In doing so I have tried to distinguish themes that are more variant from themes that are more invariant with the recognition that lived experience is always more complex, ambiguous and changing. As van Manen indicates, the phenomenological method involves the process of imaginative variation, mentally removing or adding identified themes and asking the question of whether peace would remain as peace if a theme were added or removed (personal communication, July 2, 1999).

In identifying themes of personal peace, stories of peaceful moments and transcribed interviews were read and reread with highlighter pen in hand. Units of meaning were underlined. Field notes supplemented transcribed material. Audiotapes were listened to several times in order to glean the sentiment upon participant presentation of both verbal material and symbolic representations (objects of peace). The silences, a particular reverence amongst group members, emotion in the telling or presentation, repetition of comment, defensive maneuvers, gestures, facial expressions all contributed to identification of what was meaningful about the story from the perspective of the storyteller(s).

In the case of the short stories of peaceful moments, participant submissions were intense and descriptive having few layers to peel away before glimpsing at a core. The condensed descriptive quality of the stories was implicit in the research design which requested an experience overflowing with personal peace and which selected those stories which were rich in communicating the presence of the phenomenon. A predominantly holistic approach to analysis of these smaller writings was taken. Significant phrases were highlighted for emphasis or for use as quotations in providing examples of the phenomenon. Stories were sorted and those with similar themes were grouped together to clarify repetition of themes amongst storytellers. From the perspective of describing a multifaceted experience such as personal peace, each participant was seen as a contributor, placing his or her fingerprints on a larger composition of lived experience.

Larger data sources, such as transcribed individual or group interviews, involved a more explicit movement from part to whole and an implicit process of hierarchical thematic analysis with phrases as meaning units being identified (highlighted), placed in groupings for similar sentiment, and summarized under an umbrella phrase or title. Phenomenological procedures established by Giorgi (1985) and Colaizzi (1978) which clearly outline the steps of a multilevel process of thematic abstraction influenced my own process of analysis in that their suggested steps were explicitly applied and painstakingly recorded in completion of my master's thesis in 1994. As such the process of abstraction of themes was practiced in its pristine form and has become implicit in my discernment of meaning units, themes and essential structures of lived experience for the purpose of the current study. From this foundation I have strayed with some confidence. For example, my study does not necessarily culminate in fourth order abstraction or between person analysis but rather seeks to describe the experience of peace from multiple perspectives.

There are data analysis activities involved which are both explicit and implicit but the real question (or essence of the matter) is how does one know what to underline with a felt pen, what to group as significant, what to consider an invariant theme. In a discussion with a creative individual (film-maker) I resonated with her statement, "It seems to me that what you are trying to do is much like editing a script. You search for significant statements which are identified through an intuitive process. You start with a structure, with some idea of what you might find, but then the work takes on a life of its own. It's like cutting and pasting; a synthesizing, organizing and a weaving process." I pursued her script analogy further asking how she knew which statements were significant to her work. She stated, "They sort of jump out as powerful; I pick them for power and for factual content. If the statement keeps its power, its impact or meaning over many, many readings, and even with some time lapse between readings, then I accept its significance." When asked how she evaluates her work in the end she stated, "For the way it fits. One thing fits and flows into the other and it becomes more complex as you weave the threads of story together. The whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts."

(2) Describe the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting. Writing is closely fused into the research activity and reflection itself in human science research, according to van Manen. "Language is the central concern in phenomenological research because responsive-reflective writing is the very activity of doing phenomenology" (p. 132). Many words were written and re-written and texts drafted and re-drafted as I reflected on meaning and reflected again. As Clandinin and Connelly (1994) emphasize, researchers are always engaged in living, telling, reliving and re-telling of stories.

(3) Maintain a strong and oriented relation to the phenomenon. In describing and interpreting personal peace data, my relationship to the phenomenon was purposeful, intimate and extensive rather than casual or fleeting in its orientation to the research question and to the intent of the inquiry. Pedagogical intent fired my hope to produce a text that explicates and clarifies what it means to be at peace, that is enabling and growth oriented, that will be interesting to its readers (and thus be read) and that will be influential in its promotion of mental health.

(4) Balance the research context by considering parts and whole. This research activity takes into account not only the phenomenon in its 'whatness' but also the context within which the thing itself resides. Van Manen informs that it is necessary "To step back and look at the total, at the contextual givens and how each of the parts needs to contribute toward the total" (p. 33). With respect to this inquiry, the complementary use of parts and whole has been indicated above in the analysis process. In addition, the process of 'balancing' involved consideration of the multiple voices as informants to the phenomenon, in their uniqueness and in their relatedness

to one another. The voices include my own, the participants, voices from extant literature and the prospective voices of audience to the writings. The research text represents a mediation of voices as a 'peacepoint' was sought amongst its contributors.

Doing Good Research

> *The immediate assurance is the deep thing in us,*
> *the argument is but a surface exhibition.*
> (James, 1985, p. 67)

Maturana and Varela (1987) have emphasized the difference between what the living system is doing and what it may appear to be doing from the perspective of an observer. The observation that all is not as it seems brings me to the consideration that in order for my research to be good research I must attempt to recover another's lived experience from his or her perspective as much as possible. As Wertz (1986) indicates, the crucial issue is whether the researcher's descriptions are an accurate representation of the participants' experience. Have I revealed the participants' meaning the way they meant it? As Wilber (1996) indicates, "There is no one right interpretation but there are plenty of wrong ones" (p. 89). Have I understood Ricoeur's assertion of 'autonomy of the text' which keeps me from being too literal in interpretation and writing yet brings me to the text in a particular kind of way? Ricoeur identifies, in speaking of the autonomy of text, "a threefold autonomy: with respect to the intention of the author; with respect to the cultural situation and all the sociological conditions of the production of the text; and finally, with respect to the original addressee" (in Ormiston and Schrift, 1990, p. 324).

There is much to consider in doing research. In addition, because subjective experience is, in itself, an interpretation (my interpretation of my life story) which is communicated through language, as researcher I am also concerned with whether participant description is an accurate representation of participant experience. Is what they tell me the way it really was for them? Have they been able to communicate the story in such a way that I can understand their experience?

A further question presents itself. How do I know that participants' accounts of personal experiences of peace are really about peace and not something else? In a discussion about subjective truthfulness, Wilber (1995) commented in this regard, "If you want to know what is going on in my awareness, in my mind, then you are going to have to ask me and talk to me . . . the approach is dialogical and intersubjective" (p. 117). He adds that the phenomenology of inner states such as meditative, "depends entirely on the validity claims of subjective truthfulness" (p. 116). Human science research and interpretive methodologies in particular, honor multiperspectives and interpretive 'realities'. As such, personal experience accounts of peace represent interpretations of the phenomenon from the perspective of the person who is giving his or her account of experience. In the current study, participants distinguished particular experiences as having been peaceful for themselves and communicated those experiences. In wanting to learn about peaceful experience from the perspective of a participant, as Wilber suggests, the best that I can do is to ask him or her about it and to honor the interpretation as a possible human expression of the phenomenon. As such, peaceful moment stories and others' accounts of peacefulness, provided by participants, have been taken to be a representation of participants' 'truths' in relation to what peacefulness means to them.

Further to the concern regarding the storyteller and the content of their story is the consideration that I am neither passive nor removed as the reader-interpreter of the text. A further question emerges in consideration of good interpretation of another's story. Has my authorial voice been too loud? These questions are relevant to discussions of criteria for judging the quality of a research endeavor and refer to what has traditionally been called the validity of the endeavor. According to Polkinghorne (1988) valid means well grounded and supportable.

This text on personal peace represents much more than subjective interest in the topic. It has become research by its rigor, intent to inform, and its methodologically guided process. It is incumbent upon myself to demonstrate that not only is it research but it is good research. In order to do so I look to established criteria to meet the scrutiny of the juridical process. The criteria for judging any endeavor are contingent upon what one sets out to do in the first place. Guidelines for evaluation will therefore vary according to the prevailing world-view which establishes goals, purpose and research methods.

As a researcher, I sought to provide rich description of the phenomenon of personal peace. In order to gain in-depth first hand accounts of experience specific strategies were applied as indicated in this chapter and included the following: personal preparations, bracketing, pilot projects, depth exercises, purposive sampling, spontaneity of accounts, instruction to participants prior to story-telling, first person accounts, variation (triangulation) in borrowing from the theories of three methodologies and in the use of various methods and data sources, the use of research notes and journal entries, audio-taped verbal discourse, open-ended questions and availability to orient to the topic over an extended period of time. The research design also included validity enhancing strategies specific to groups as indicated in the discussion of focus group process (earlier in this chapter). The steps undertaken in this research and the rationale for their use have been clearly indicated in detail. As Osborne indicates, the presenting of coherent and convincing arguments and the clear indication of steps taken is an important method of validation (Osborne, 1990). The science of the study was thus exemplified.

No human science research endeavor would be complete without reference to its softer side. Whether likened to a work of art, a symphony, drama or story the stuff of the lifeworld is inevitably known in a 'felt' way. As

James (1985) points out, naming is an intellectual function while experiencing an experience is more like a sensation (p. 67). He emphasizes intuitive knowing ("our impulsive belief") as setting up the original body of truth upon which our philosophies rest. From this perspective the most important criteria in judging good research text is that it conveys a feeling of reality to the reader.

According to van Manen, "The essence or nature of an experience has been adequately described in language if the description reawakens or shows us the lived quality and significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner" (van Manen, 1990, p. 151). Van Manen discusses requirements of method that give power and convincing validity to human science texts. He indicates that our texts need to be oriented, strong, rich, and deep.

In conceiving of a strong and oriented standard for research, I have remained turned toward the phenomenon of peace, poised to receive and focussed on applicability in the real world. My interest in peace is not as a detached observer but as one who is oriented toward psychological well-being personally and professionally. Richness as a standard has been the focus through use of vivid and detailed anecdote and description. I have sought peace in many places and under a variety of circumstances in order to reach depth of meaning. I have aimed to produce a compelling text because in the end what really matters is the reader's ability to say, "Ah yes, isn't that just the way it is," or "I know just how it feels," as the shared elements of experience speak from the deep thing within. The standard for doing good research thus points to aesthetic guidelines as relevant when seeking to explicate and convey the meaning of a phenomenon such as personal peace.

Ethical Considerations

Before engaging in research activities I gained ethical clearance from the Department of Educational Psychology, University of Alberta. This was an important step in recognizing the significant ethical considerations relevant to the current study.

To engage in human science research is to enter a relationship with its participants. I am reminded of the ethic of care that is considered significant in moral development (Gilligan, 1982). When I care about someone I approach him or her with sensitivity and with respect. I honor his or her uniqueness. Within the context of a research project I endeavor to maintain the same criteria. As van Manen (1990) stated, "Pedagogical research cannot step outside the moral values that grant pedagogy its meaning" (p. 162).

I entered this research project with an awareness that participants may be affected by their involvement. As indicated, I explored the feasibility of researching peaceful moments by writing several of my own. These preliminary personal stories had an effect on me which compelled me to desire an extension in duration and an increase in frequency of these moments. This lead me to reflect on my own life as peaceful or peace*less* and conjured up emotions ranging from joy and optimism to sorrow and regret. In addition, I resolved to change my life story in the future. I thus enter this research story with a sense of how participating in this project may affect its contributors. As one man commented, "It has been hard for me to write this story because I am reminded of how precious peace is and how little I have of it." Later the same man informed that he is more aware of life's peaceful moments since he wrote his story.

I found myself applying the ethic of care in an unexpected manner. Many persons responded to my advertisements in the local newspaper (seeking participants) including several individuals who had severe emotional problems. On two separate occasions the problems were severe enough to warrant my arranging immediate intervention with counselling agencies. Though these individuals did not participate in the project because the true purpose of their contact was to seek help, I felt that the obligation to 'take care' was there nonetheless.

Care was taken to protect the confidentiality of the participants by altering details of stories as appropriate. Anonymity and fictionalizing sections of the story are important ethical considerations in the activity of conducting personal experience research (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994). Prior to participation, informed consent was obtained. In the case of children or youth who participated, signed parental consent was also obtained.

A concern with focus group research is confidentiality amongst group members. Although I can ensure confidentiality of original research data, shared material precludes this guarantee. Participants were made aware of this circumstance so that they could make informed choices regarding disclosure. Mutual respect was discussed at the start of the groups. Specific design strategy included preparing participants for freedom to speak but also freedom to remain silent. In group settings momentum can build and over-disclosure, followed by discomfort, can result. As moderator of the process, I encouraged appropriate self-disclosure and discouraged disclosure which went beyond the aims of the research or individual 'comfort zones'. The strategy of private writing exercises reduced pressure to disclose.

One other circumstance which tends to arise when group members are particularly empathic (which is a good quality for phenomenological research) is that troubled members may attempt to discuss unrelated problems and seek advice from group members. For example, during my involvement with the pilot group one member became distraught and began seeking resolution from group members. Though we dealt sensitively with the issues, we did so as quickly as possible and moved on to the course content. After class I was available to talk privately with the individual and provide therapeutic options. This situation reminded me to be very clear at the start of the subsequent research groups in explaining the difference between a therapy group and a research group.

Finally, remaining true to the data is not simply a criterion of good research. The story represents a significant moment in a person's life and carries with it personal meaning. I consider it an ethical responsibility to describe and interpret meaning with sensitivity and an openness that does not impose my own meaning on another. As Clandinin and Connelly (1994) suggest, "When we come together in research projects, all of us begin to live and tell a new story of our collaborative work together" (p. 418).

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPLORING THE MEANING OF PEACEFULNESS; SIX THEMES OF EXPERIENCE

What does it mean to be at peace? How do we experience peace when the busy business of life dissipates? What is *there* resting gently in an interlude? This chapter explores the questions through the study of personal experience. Peaceful moment stories are the main contributors to the research topic of peace because they offer a rich 'concentration' of the phenomenon. Like a basket overflowing with fruit, they offer colorful variety and abundance. Texts arising out of interviews and group encounters supplement and clarify peaceful moment stories.

This chapter is organized around six main headings: Rhythm of Accord, Promise in Peace, Inner Rejuvenation, Sweet Surrender in Peace, Kinship in Peace and Window to Eternity. These six themes offer a certain invariance of meaning that seemed to recur in stories and reflections that people gave as accounts of their experience. The six themes are in no way offered as absolute or definitive. As van Manen points out, whatever distinctions are made, they are always provisional (personal communication, July 2, 1999). The distinction of six invariant themes does not mean that there are no other possible invariant themes that comprise the experience of peacefulness. It may also be that in some of these themes that seem to be more invariant, or shared amongst people who tell stories, there are aspects of variance.

Before turning to the six themes, I begin with an introduction to peaceful moments as unforgettable. This is followed by a brief sojourn into peace*lessness* in order to 'capture' what peace is not. The reader is invited to enter into peaceful moment stories shared by the storytellers of this research project which are presented throughout the research text.

Peaceful Moments are Unforgettable

Resting in a lifetime of moments, cocooned amongst the other varieties of experience, lies the peaceful moment. In attempting to get hold of the meaning of the peaceful experience I asked participants to engage that part of the memory that has distinguished it; that holds a certain aspect of an experience that seems to belong to peacefulness as opposed to something else. Invited by a question, "Can you tell a story about a peaceful moment in your life," personal peace stories flowed forth with little hesitation. When I invited individuals to talk or write about their peaceful moments, responses such as, "I know the exact moment," and "I can think of three distinct times," preceded a bouquet of heartfelt stories.

Visions experienced many years before became available to the storyteller in the present. These are memories that do not fade with time. Indeed, they have been cradled within a context of other less significant moments, set apart by a beginning and an end and a substance that is somehow different. As one man commented, "It was *then* that a moment of peace began; a moment I will never forget."

Good Morning Mr. Sun

> It was a morning some seventy years ago, when I first began my relationship with the sun. I remember how I awoke before everyone else and crept quietly out the door of our little farm house, to the back of the barn. There I sat just waiting for the sun to come up. When it rose it was a moment of glory and I felt that it was shining just for me, because of me. I felt the golden rays throughout my whole body and the warmth of the wall against my back. Pink and yellow flowers reflected the brilliant light. I could see what was just beginning in life. A bud began to open and revealed to me its golden beauty. A prairie dog, mouth filled with grass, passed between me and the sun. It stopped on its newly dug mound, stood perfectly still, and looked at me. It, too,

seemed to be savoring this moment of peace. As I slipped back into our house and got dressed for school, I was somehow different. I had been touched by the sun. This memory will never leave me. Even now as I step into the early morning sun I can close my eyes, feel its warmth, and peace comes to a sometimes troubled mind.

I marvelled at the clarity, freshness and sweetness of the elder's story, the gentle manner of telling, the expression of softness on his face as he held yesterday's moment in his hand today. It was as though he held it out for me. I could look at it, feel it. Though many individuals did not reach as far back in time in searching the memory, story is always retroflective (as time slips along). An interesting phenomenon occurred as individuals told their stories. Frequently the story would begin in the past tense ("I *was* sitting at the edge of the dock), and partway through it might change to the present tense (the wind *is* blowing through my hair). I did not notice this change in tense when I read the stories for the first time because I was caught up in the contents as though experiencing the experience. Other individuals spontaneously began telling the story in the present tense, I *am* watching or it *is* a cool fall morning. I have retained the mixture of tense within some of the stories and between stories and though it may not be grammatically correct it preserves the sense of *realness* or authenticity of experience.

Manifestations of deep emotion accompanied story-telling to the extent that, even when shared in a group encounter, the power of personal peace experiences was evident. Tears often accompanied verbal accounts. Intensity was apparent during group writing experiences as participants seemed to be 'lost' in their writings. As I was happily drawn into the stories I gained a deepened sense that there was a re-living of sorts which occurred. There was something pure and innocent in the manner of telling. As I noted the clarity of detail contained within the 'well preserved' stories, I thought of my son's time capsule.

The Time Capsule

Hidden behind the socks and hockey cards, pressed up against the back left corner of an infrequently opened drawer in my son's dresser, lies the time capsule. It's an odd thing really, because it is simply two emptied tin cans (soup labels removed) with open ends sealed together using duct tape. Vaguely I remember the exercise as Mr. Milton, Casey's grade six teacher, had his students bring cherished personal items of today to school to place within the hollow cans for the *sealing*. "You are all invited to a reunion," he said. I imagine the words, "When we open this together during your twelfth year of school you will see what is preserved inside; untouched by time the contents will be revealed once again." I recall the hiding of the capsule in the drawer five years ago and how Casey tucked it away as though he had some great secret; some special formula to make time stand still. Today the silver cocoon holds its contents safe inside, encased and protected, untouched by the passage of time.

My digression has led to nostalgia but enters to make the point that seventy-five peaceful moment stories, which were collected for the purpose of this study, share something in common with the time capsule. Though the contents of the moments are not things in the same manner of matter, there emerged a moment somehow held very well intact, rich with content and discernible characteristics. As though invited to the opening of the time capsule, I became a privileged guest as sights, sounds, smells and feelings of a forgone moment presented themselves. The storyteller 'opened' the peaceful moment not as one who is recalling an event, but as one who is there for the first time. The unforgettable quality of this cherished moment was indicated in the words of participants:

> It was a moment I will never forget.

There are certain moments where there has been a definite imprinting upon my memory.

I can reflect on this moment with a certainty.

The memory will never leave me.

It is a moment which is embedded in my heart and soul.

The peaceful moment rests within, like a gift to ourselves. What a happy revelation! We hold the secret contents of the peace experience safe and snug within our own souls.

'Peace*lessness*'

Less restful than the peaceful moment, states of agitation and discontent also punctuate our lives. Disruptions to peace are readily identifiable as are the characteristics of such states. Features may be so visible that they have been referred to as 'symptoms' by some mental health professionals. Constellations of symptoms are sufficiently common that they have been grouped and given names in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders which is updated and revised regularly, currently for the fourth time (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Though we do not all suffer diagnosable mental 'disorder', it is human nature to err, to experience a less than perfect order or a *dis*order of the human system be it in the psychological or physical realm. In other words, disruptions in peaceful functioning (to greater or lesser extents) are characteristic of what it means to be human. Perhaps we can understand peace by knowing something of those states that represent the antithesis of the phenomenon. Do we recognize peace by its difference? It's easy to see what peace is not. The following stories serve to illustrate an absence of peace as a hurried pace, a sense of fear, and bitter anger overcome a gentler state of being.

Run For Your Life

> Hurry. Please hurry. We are late. Grab your jacket. I'll start the car and don't forget the note to your teacher explaining, once again, why you are late . . . Please excuse . . . sorry . . . The woman drives blindly, checking for radar traps along the way. The station wagon jerks to a halt in the familiar parking lot on campus. Within a second she is moving quickly toward the building steps. The strap on her leather briefcase feels heavy on her shoulder. Her books, her lunch, some bills and an appointment book bounce around inside. Her life in a briefcase slaps her body as she runs. Breathlessly, she makes her apologies as she takes her place in the lecture hall. Though she sits quite still she can feel her body vibrating. Though her eyes focus on the face of her instructor they do not make a connection. Her thoughts are somewhere else. "Seven minutes late," she thinks, "seven minutes late for life."

This is not a story about peace. A hurried pace, a speedy body and a mind in discontent leave the woman feeling that she is missing life as it should be. Unable to focus, she sees very little other than the blur of a life passing her by. There is no clarity to her vision, no substance of life in her grasp as she feels it slipping through her fingers, barely touched in her haste. She is like a little bug caught under glass going round and round in circles. She is too busy to see the blade of grass which leads out of the jar to freedom. She doesn't look up.

Time becomes the driving force behind reaching her destination as though in a race against time she literally runs for her life and although she arrives she has not really arrived. A body sits as though separate from a mind that is unable or unwilling to catch up. She is almost ahead of herself. Or is she behind?

It is easy to know when we are not at peace. Does slowing down the pace provide peace? Perhaps it offers an invitation to an inner calm yet I can sit motionless and be in turmoil. I can be walking and feel at peace in my world. Does it matter where I walk or how I walk? And where is it that I am going?

> *I'm in a hurry to get things done.*
> *I rush and rush until life's no fun.*
> *All I really have to do is live and die*
> *But I'm in a hurry and don't know why.*
>
> (Alabama, 1992)

As we enter the race, with a fear of being left behind, it is as though there is little reason other than hurry itself. As Holmes (1949) pointed out, few people carry a *stop*-watch but almost everyone in our rushing world has a '*go*-watch'. Is it possible to be at peace with the world we live in; to reach some agreement in a dialectic with this busy life? Its speed clutters the mind and vibrates the soul. How are pace and time related to peace?

For some, feeling pressured by time and speeding through life invade peace. For others, as in the following story, fear is the culprit.

On Guard

The frail woman peers nervously through a tiny slit in the curtain to the street beyond. She would take a chance and go outside. The reassurances of her therapist seem hollow now as she scuttles down the street to the corner store. Each step is an eternity though she has only a few steps to travel. It takes all her energy to move away from her 'hideout'. An uneasy feeling accompanies her down the street like a menacing cloud. "Calm yourself," she implores. "They say there is nothing to fear." Yet she glances behind her just to be sure that dark ghosts from days long past are not somehow following her. "It is gone," she silently screams, yet her breath quickens as does her pace. She swallows down a lump of fear which drops like lead to the pit of her stomach. "It's so very cold," she thinks. She pulls her shawl closer around her as the strangeness and vastness of the world engulf her.

For this woman, the world feels unsafe and unfriendly. She is estranged and uncomfortable; not at home in the world. Threat hangs in open spaces: she restricts her own freedom and hides from others. The world becomes very small and closed off. Like an insect caught in a jar, she seals herself off from the world. In her loss of freedom she knows little of peace and stands *on guard*. Time moves slowly for the watcher of dread. How time drags through spaces of discontent!

A third story depicting a lack of peace is derived from my experiences as a probation officer. The boy in the following story could have been any one of many youths that I met. The one word that comes to mind in recalling the shattered peace that characterized some of their lives and of the lives of those around them is 'angry'.

At War

The 15 year old boy saunters into the probation office. I could cut the air of hostility with the knife he pulled during a recent scuffle at the high school. He stands daring me to lay down the law and challenge him into some form of compliance. "It wasn't my fault. The guy deserved it," he mumbles. "And did the others last year deserve it too," I think as I review an increasingly problematic file. In a way it was a typical young offender file, problems at school, problems at home . . . kicked out . . . group home . . . parents unwilling to take him back and so on. I wonder what he might have done at home which warranted his first boot out the door at age twelve years or the disowning which I understood was part of his youthful experience. I look hard at the boy . . . so angry, so ready to fight the world. And so the hurting boy hurts others. I feel helpless in the wake of his pain. He has a hard fight ahead, I think.

The youth carries a heavy burden of bitterness. His broad shoulders stiffen in readiness for the fight. He experiences his world as unloving and uncaring and he does more than stand guard. He fights back. The world is his enemy and he a warrior. In his avenging stance there is little ease. Anger and hatred replace softer feelings that were smothered somewhere along the path. He is trying to beat his way out of the glass jar. His movement in space is violent. And what of those who watch? How shattered is their peace? For some, a heavy heart accompanies the encounter. For his victims the bitter taste of vengeance enters as a spoiler.

As is exemplified in the three stories above, peace*less* moments are powerful and draw attention to themselves. Perhaps this is why James (1985) suggested that humankind has a tendency toward morbid mindedness. Similarly, Epston and White (1992) note the tenacious character of oppressive stories. For some, a state of peace*lessness* is pervasive. For the vast majority of so-called 'normal' individuals peace*lessness* slips in and out of life. The impermanence of troubled states of being is evidenced by reports of times which are free of turmoil and pain. Most of us know peace. We have felt it and can recall the special moments. In this clearing, lived space becomes occupied by kinder moments. One such moment carries peace within. I turn now for a close look at some small units of peace through study of the peaceful moment story.

The Many Faces of Peace

In gathering stories of peace, the vast variety of the peace experience was evident. Extraordinary encounters, which were very powerful, were revealed as individuals spoke of their "one true peace experience" or their "miracle of peace." "All else pales by comparison," one woman indicated as she struggled to locate fainter manifestations of the phenomenon in the life which followed her "miracle." Other stories were more ordinary, if one could use the word ordinary at all, when speaking of the peaceful state. Though peace was sought in everyday experience, moments where the spirit of peace is unmistakable or extreme are worthy of attention. Deep shades of peace and softer hues present in a variety of life events.

Nine peaceful moment stories are presented at this time. They have been selected, from a large pool of lived-experience descriptions of personal peace, to exemplify 'the many faces' of peacefulness and for an initial glimpse into the phenomenon. Following each personal experience story is a more phenomenological description which sets the scene for subsequent thematic analysis of peacefulness.

The following nine stories are not the only lived-experience accounts which are being utilized as data in this study. Reference will be made to many other stories throughout this research document. One story may serve to clarify several themes or characteristics of the phenomenon and thus may be referred to more than once. When any of the following nine stories are utilized in discussing a specific theme, the story will be identified by title. At that time, relevant excerpts or anecdotes will be examined for a closer look. For now, the following nine peaceful moment stories introduce subsequent thematic aspects of the phenomenon of peacefulness and hopefully will invite a moment of peace for the readers of this research text.

The Accident

> My moment of peace occurred within the context of a traumatic setting. I was driving in a small motor home on a beautiful sunny day when I was hit broadside by a speeding vehicle. For what seemed like an hour or more, but was probably 15 seconds, the motor home rolled and flipped and I was pitching back and forth all around. Everything slowed down and I know my exact thoughts and feelings at that time. At first I thought, "I will be Okay," but then, as the moments continued, I came to the realization, "I am not going to be Okay." My first thought was about Rose. What a way for her to find out that I have died; a policeman at our door.

> My next reaction was one of the most peaceful experiences that I have ever had. I felt, in the midst of this chaos, "Everything is well with the world . . . I am going to die." The calm was tremendous. I thought, "This is fine, there is nothing that I can do now." It *was* fine; I could die now. So calm . . . more than that . . . like a sense of well-being. Everything is fine . . . everything is Okay." A sense of euphoria . . . a glorious feeling . . . a God-like feeling. There wasn't anything I could do. I was in God's hands. There wasn't a care anymore. In that moment of peace I gave up living. I couldn't live anymore . . . it was out of my control.

It is possible for a person to experience a sense of profound safety in times of chaos and fright. In situations that present a great threat to physical well-being, as in near death experiences, a sense of spiritual well-being may override fears once there is a recognition that it is out of one's control. As in the story above, there may be a handing over or surrendering of control to a higher power ("in God's hands") which entails a trust that transcends corporeality. In the 'giving over' of self there is a sense of unburdening. Ironically, at times of greatest threat, we may have a sense of everything being well with the world and experience a deep reassurance, something like a tremendous calm or even a glorious feeling. Is there a promise in lived experience that transcends fear or pain? Is a sense of spiritual well-being and safety a component of peacefulness?

A further discussion of *The Accident* , as representative of lived experiences of peacefulness, will take place subsequently in the research text. Anecdotes from the story will reappear in the text under the following headings: Promise in Peace, p. 109; Sweet Surrender in Peace, pp. 123, 124; Practical Application of Findings p. 220.

The Cross

In my life I have known one moment of peaceful bliss. I had a miracle happen to me twenty years ago, a spell-binding moment of peace. It happened when my grandmother died. I had just been to her funeral which took place in a tiny little church in small town Alberta on a dreary dark day. Snowy and cold, it was like a Dr. Zhivago funeral. The sky was ominous . . . solidly overcast. Joe and I had a flight to catch so we left before the actual burial at the gravesite. As we were driving through the country I was watching the sky, looking gloomily out the window. Then suddenly, right before my eyes, there was an oval opening in the sky and there were three puffs across and down making a perfect sign of the cross. A brilliant light was shining through it.

I couldn't move. I was in shock . . . awestruck. A feeling of peace engulfed my body. I knew in that moment that my grandmother was in heaven. This lasted for only a minute or so, though I really can't say for sure, before it disappeared. During that time I remained silent as though unable to speak. I believe that this occurred at the moment that my grandmother was put in the ground. It was a sign just for me that, "It's Okay," and "She is fine." I told Joe about it after it disappeared, although I had a feeling, "This is mine . . . I don't want to share it with anyone." For many days after I was reeling from the experience. I never spoke of it again until now. When you asked me for a peaceful moment there have been none that can come close to that one. Funny it should have been on such a sad day. I guess I've had my miracle.

There are moments in life, as described in the above story, that offer a glimpse of something greater than the self, of a higher purpose. The experience may be very personal, as though one is being singled out to receive a sign, and the thought may be, "I want to keep this to myself. I don't want to share it." The experience may be very powerful and be referred to as "a miracle" as one is lifted above the problems in life and senses a spiritual connection. In a moment, it is possible to feel an unshakable sense that everything is Okay even in times of grief and sadness. The feeling in these special moments may be experienced as something that engulfs the body and, as in the case of the woman in the above story, it may linger a long time after the moment has passed.

The story, *The Cross,* exemplifies themes of peacefulness that are discussed in the following research text: Rhythm Of Accord, p. 101; Promise in Peace, p. 107; Kinship in Peace, p. 153, 160; Window To Eternity, p. 174.

The Ski Trip

It had been a long, difficult week, jam packed with action and even getting away for a weekend of skiing at Banff had required considerable effort. Suitcases filled with clothes, boxes of food, back packs, ski equipment and rambunctious children were all packed into the family van. Then we arrive and Doug and I unpack it all, pass out in bed and wake at the crack of dawn to be first on the hill so Jimmy can carve up the virgin snow with his board. Its tiring just thinking about it.

In the morning we make our way to the ski hill and ride the lift to the top. I remember everyone heading off down the mountain and leaving me standing there alone, looking down as they disappeared from view. It was then that I experienced a very peaceful moment. I stood for a quiet time and marvelled at the majestic beauty. The serenity of the mountain lay below. Nothing stirred. The sunshine seemed to light up the entire earth. I felt a light breeze touch me with its evergreen sweetness, that mountain smell that exists nowhere else on earth. The sky was baby blue . . . crystal clear . . . so refreshing. At that moment I felt totally relaxed, without a care in the world, yet at the same time I felt empowered . . . prepared to conquer the mountain that lay below.

Though life can be very busy and hectic there are times when it all seems to slow down and a kind of quieter moment is upon us. We may invite these contrasting times by journeying to places that seem to rejuvenate us as in the case of the woman in the story above. In these moments we may be drawn into the beauty of the natural world noting the sights and smells that surround us. In this way there is a sense of being fully alive. Though in beholding the huge expanse around us we may feel small and alone, we also retain a sense of belonging or connectedness to the larger whole during these moments. Cares seem to vanish, having somehow been put into perspective. The experience is one of being refreshed in mind, body and spirit. We may feel as though we have the strength, once again, to conquer a mountain or simply to take on the day.

Reference will be made to the story, *The Ski Trip*, in the following research text when discussing the themes of peacefulness: Inner Rejuvenation, p. 113; The Practical Dimension of Peace, p. 210.

At the Kitchen Sink

> I watch my 11 year old son skating on the rink in the backyard, hockey stick in hand, so purely having fun. Wham . . . a goal and yet another. His cheeks are rosy, so healthy. I think, "He is so happy in his world of ice, snow and hockey." I am leaning on the edge of the sink, no longer attending to the stack of dirty supper dishes, just watching him. He'd like that, me watching him have fun. My thoughts drift to the rink itself. Each year, the tradition, the rink out back and each year he waits until we flood the back yard. Like a field of dreams it glistens in the night light and it speaks of our home, our special place. There is something so settling about that rink in the back yard and the hockey net at one end and the hockey stick perched on the net, ready to go as soon as its enthusiastic owner returns home from school. And so my thoughts drift. Now the rink is occupied and I feel a flooding of emotion as I see him so full of life out there. Back and forth. Back and

forth. I only know that I love to watch him play there and that I get a feeling that all is well in my world when I do.

There are places that we go to or spaces that occur for ourselves in a day where our troubles seem to dissipate, as when we day dream or visit a peaceful holiday spot. In these spaces we may experience a particular reassurance and comfort. In whatever way we are living our lives, we may seek reassurance that we are doing so in a meaningful way. There are moments that come, like openings in space, when we feel validated, when we feel good about who we are. Take for example, the woman in the story above. As 'mother' her thoughts drift to her child and she experiences a strong sense that she has been a good parent. She sees the happiness of her child and feels comfort in the experience of 'home'. Like a validation of our existence, in a moment it is possible to stand witness to the manifestation of all that we hold most dear in our lives. A very settling feeling may accompany these moments and it may seem that "all is well" with the world. This can be a very emotional experience.

Excerpts from the story, *At the Kitchen Sink,* reappear in the following research text: Rhythm of Accord, p. 98; Kinship in Peace: p. 152; The Sensual Dimension of Peace p. 189.

The Music Man

Friday night, Feb. 2, 1997. Preparations for the weekend gig were as usual; rent lights, monitors, microphones, the whole nine yards. The setting was at the Club Star Lounge . . . show time 10:00 PM. As we finished soundcheck, it was 15 minutes to show time. The final five minutes can always put a knot in my stomach. Our show consisted of original music, cover song material, smoke and lights. About halfway into the first set things were sounding good, however when the band and I went into *Death of a Thousand Cuts* it was absolutely perfect. I had never in my life had such a warm feeling. I just closed my eyes and

> became the music. Quite ironic to find a peaceful moment like that in such a stressful industry.

Though we are aware of ourselves as separate 'beings' in the sense that we reflect back upon ourselves as unique, distinct persons, it is possible to have a very strong sense that we are one with everything that surrounds us. We may be drawn into a sense of unity by music or beauty or in some other way that speaks of harmony and flow. In these moments of 'oneness' we may not reflect upon ourselves at all losing sense of physical boundaries and transcending our corporeality. As in the story above, a man is immersed in his surroundings as music frees him from the constraints of his mortal self. All is as one. Like for the music man, in a moment of perfect fusion we may feel warmth as we drift beyond the noise and stress of life, floating in a rhythm of harmony and accord.

Anecdotes from *Music Man* will be utilized in the following research text to exemplify and clarify aspects of peacefulness: Rhythm of Accord, p. 99; Kinship in Peace, p. 133; The Sensual Dimension of Peace, p. 192.

Whirlwind

> The snow is falling, gently, softly. Large snowflakes and absolute quiet. I put on skis and head into the woods before the others are ready. Magic surrounds me. I experience silence and tranquility so profound that I have to stop and take a deep breath. It's so very quiet. Time seems to stand still as I look all around me. There are no thoughts of anything but the beauty in the moment. The fresh air bites my cheeks . . . a tingly feeling. As I stand there I notice a small whirlwind of snow blowing over the soft white valley. I watch as it heads toward me and circles right through me.
>
> At that moment, I felt like I had been touched by something that represented all the beauty and goodness in the natural world. The

group soon caught up to me and the silence ended but for me it was a perfect moment of peace.

There are times in life when sensation and feelings rule over thoughts and we experience a direct contact with all that is beautiful and good in our lives. Unlike in moments of a different kind, the experience is not filtered through the screen of personal history and there is a sense of being in touch in a pure way. As in the story above, the woman feels as though she has made direct contact with a spirit of beauty and goodness. The sensation is that something is moving through her deeply, moving beyond the surface of her senses to the core of her being. In this way the experience is one of spiritual connection. The moment may have an unreal quality in its perfection and its place outside the normal boundaries of time. It is as though time is lost or doesn't exist at all. The moment may be experienced as silent and tranquil and the world as gentle and soft. This experience can be distinguished from those that preceded and followed it. Sometimes when the moment ends there is a sense of having slipped back into reality.

The peaceful moment story, *Whirlwind*, exemplifies aspects of peacefulness that are subsequently discussed in the following research text: Kinship in Peace, p. 160; Window to Eternity, p. 170, 172; The Illusive Dimension of Peace, p. 200.

Floating in Space

> I was at a beach in Santa Rosalia on the sea of Cortez. It was a long bus ride from Tiajuana and I couldn't wait to go swimming in the warm salty water; a dream I had been waiting to fulfill for a long time. When the ride was over, I collected my bag and trudged off to the waters edge. After climbing down a steep hill and undressing, I put my feet in the water. It was warm. I went deeper, carefully picking my way along the rocky bottom until I was up to my neck. I swam aimlessly, diving to the bottom and snatching for the multicolored fish who dwelled in the

> rocks below. When I became bored with chasing fish, I floated on my back at the surface, bent my knees and grabbed my ankles behind me, then I closed my eyes.
>
> I noticed the silence under water. The only sound that could be heard was the water sloshing around on the surface, fluid and soft. It only added to the tranquility I was experiencing. I felt as though I was weightless and, with my eyes closed, floating in space. The waves were large and smooth, gently rocking me up and down. The longer I was out there, the more time became inapplicable and the more I drifted into peace. It was complete serenity, and the only way it could have been disrupted was if somebody came into the water and swam over to me, or if a boat drove over me because I couldn't hear anything on the surface.

The freedom to act on our own behalf, to make choices and act out those choices, is part of our human heritage. Thus the application of effort is part of our humanity and one could say that we are empowered to "carry our own weight" to move ourselves through time and space, to act out our lives. Yet it is within the realm of human possibility to experience times when we feel as though we are being carried by something larger than ourselves, as in the above story. Like a child in the arms of a loving parent, in those moments we are willing to let go of our own power and to be held in trust. The feeling may be one of weightlessness as though floating in space. This is a space that is free of effort, requiring no movement from us in time and space. There may be a sense of being cocooned, tucked safely away from disruptions of the outside world.

Floating in Space exemplifies aspects of the phenomenon of peacefulness that are developed further in the following research text: Rhythm of Accord, p. 98; Sweet Surrender in Peace, p. 126; The Sensual Dimension of Peace, p. 188, 192; The Illusive Dimension of Peace, p. 200.

A Walk With Meesha

It was a summer of pain, re-adjustment, learning to live with loss. Each day began with a heavy heart, little in the hours to follow that lifted my sorrow or made me smile. My solace of sorts came from long walks with Meesha, my German Shepherd, oblivious to the reason for the excessive attention received, but totally appreciative nonetheless. Our sojourn treks were routine, with Meesha pulling at her leash, expectant of freedom once the river's edge was reached. This day was no different. Constraints removed, she ran, jumped, played games of tag, circling and returning to jump upon my legs or brush my hands. She bounded up and down the riverbank, back and forth writhing her body in the water, spraying streams as she shook beside me.

My thoughts drifted, as usual those days, to the hopelessness of it all, wondering if wounds so deep ever really heal. I watched the dog, wishing my heart could be so free. She stopped, paws upon the rocks, turned to look at me and in her eyes I saw such sympathy, such love and devotion. For those few seconds my heart lifted. I felt free of pain, free of burden, appreciated so fully by a creature dependent upon me for her moments of joy. I was worthy for that moment.

It is through our connection to other that we first learn about who we are and come to value or devalue ourselves. When we suffer from emotional wounds it is easy to lose track of our own self-worth, as in the story above. Moments of hopelessness may enter our lives. There are also moments of a very different kind which have the power to heal us and lift us from our pain. These are moments that encompass loving connections to ourselves and to others. In a moment we may once again feel as the woman in the story, *A Walk With Meesha*, "worthy for that moment." It is through a sense of being needed by another that her heart lifts and she is freed of her burden.

Ironically it is in a moment that securely links us to others that we can find our freedom.

Further reference will be made to the story, *A Walk With Meesha,* in the following research text: Rhythm of Accord, p. 102; Kinship in Peace, p. 140, 152; The Practical Dimension of Peace, p. 208.

Egg-salad Sandwich

> Every so often I get that deep feeling, as I get older, a sort of feeling that it was all meant to be . . . times when I feel so good about myself; about everything. And that happens with egg-salad sandwiches and sometimes when I make pyrogies. I will tell you my most recent egg-salad sandwich story because it was a glorious moment of peace.
>
> George and I headed out by car on our vacation and had reached our evening destination at the Mount Robson restaurant. As we had done year after year at this very spot, the two of us ordered an egg-salad sandwich. It was an unbelievably clear night and I could see the stars. I felt like I was a young girl again meeting George for the first time and being so much in love. I felt young and I could think of what lay ahead of us and how it's all going to be wonderful yet not knowing what would be the future or where we'd end up. When we were young it was like that . . . so exciting. And I felt like that again and it all fell into place for me. Like I was twenty years old on my first date with my first love. And all as I ate the egg-salad sandwich. I've told this story to a lot of people . . . how I felt at peace . . . how everything felt well with the world.

In our lives it is possible to experience times during which everything seems to fit and fall neatly into place as though a perfect master plan has been realized. As for the woman in the preceding story, it is as though our vision has broadened to include all time and space in a holistic apprehension of life's rhythm. Completeness characterizes the experience. A lifetime of moments are reconciled in a merging of past, present and future. This may be experienced as a moment of timelessness and the sense may be that one is young again, full of life and vigor. There may be re-experiencing of events from the past as if they existed in the present. As in the story above, we may feel "turned on" to life and that "all is well" in the world just as it is. Gratitude marks the moment as does a kindly feeling toward self and a recognition of deep loving connection to other.

Further reference will be made to *Egg-salad Sandwich* in the following research text: Rhythm of Accord, p. 100; Inner Rejuvenation, p. 115; Kinship in Peace, p. 140, 149.

The above stories were presented by participants as a significant moment of peace in their lives. Though conceived of in different ways by different people, the same psychological form of event or inner experience flows through the stories. The spirit of peace is recognizable amidst the varieties of lived experience. From the extraordinary to the ordinary, in a moment filled with sound or silence, born of sadness or joy, sickness or health, in the magic of a winter wonderland or the mundane reality of a kitchen sink, the personal peace experience finds its stronghold. It is this spirit of peace, or deep meaning, that is being sought in studying the particulars of experience.

There are many faces to personal peace. There are also many vantage points from which to study the phenomenon and a variety of ways to organize the linguistic description or explication of meaning. As van Manen (1990) suggests, in researching lived experience the task of the researcher and writer is "to construct a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience" (p. 41). The following linguistic description of personal peace represents a chosen vantage point and manner of expression which emerged in studying over seventy-five personal accounts of peace. It is organized around six themes : Rhythm of Accord, Promise in Peace, Inner

Rejuvenation, Sweet Surrender in Peace, Kinship In Peace and Window To Eternity.

In this study I am articulating many dimensions of meaning, some of which are variant and some of which could be agreed to be less variant and more invariant. The six themes represent the more invariant dimension and together comprise an uneasy, imperfect, incomplete, tentative and provisional collective meaning or signification that seems to describe the human experience of peacefulness.

(I) RHYTHM OF ACCORD

And you shall bless the darkness as you bless the light.
(Gibran, 1974, p. 82)

The word 'accord' means to be in agreement; harmony (Webster's College Dictionary, 1991, p. 9). As indicated earlier in this document (chapter three), the word 'peace' has its origins in the Latin *pax,* treaty of peace, and is related to the Latin *pacem,* to make a treaty or pact (Barnhart, 1988, p. 767; Klein, 1966-67, p. 1143) whereby an accord has been struck. The peaceful experience reconciles, or brings into harmony, the seeming contradictions in life until they are as one in a perfect balance. Reminiscent of the classic Eastern philosophy of the 'One' or the Tao, the Principle of Unity is represented in the ancient symbol of the Yin and the Yang and speaks of all things flowing into one in a harmonious circular rhythm (for further discussion of the Principle of Unity see Dalai Lama, 1994; de Bary, 1960; Welch, 1957, and chapter two of this study under 'Peace and Religion').

Rhythm of Accord is the first of six themes of peacefulness that follow in the research text. It is being presented under the sub-headings of The Motion of Peace, Unification of Peace, Flowing in a Circle of Life and The Healing Touch.

The Motion of Peace

Like the gentle rocking of the boy riding the waves in the story, *Floating in Space,* (p. 92) and the rhythm of the skater going back and forth as his mother watches him in the story, *At the Kitchen Sink* (p. 89), there is a motion to peace. This is not about stagnant waters but rather still waters that are teaming with life. Up and down, in and out, back and forth, life and death, joy and sadness, black and white, good and bad . . . a life moves forward. Must I be shielded from the dark side to see the light? Would I then really be alive or would I be hiding like the woman peering through her window in the story, *On Guard* (p. 82). The seeming dichotomies of life present themselves at every turn as life's vital tensions speak of the pulse of human existence. The rhythm of peace seems similar to the rhythm of life itself.

In conceiving of the word 'tension', one thinks of the dictionary definition of "strain; anxiety; stress" (Webster's College Dictionary, 1991, p. 1376). One also thinks of 'friction' when there is 'tension'. Things heat up. The motion of peace is firm and strong yet gentle and free flowing. For peace, life is not a contradiction of opposing forces but rather a complementarity. There is no need to force a fit; to push or pull. Peace flows along gently moistening the trail with tears of joy and sadness. Mystic and poet, William Blake, speaks of a sense of safety in the world which can be accomplished once there is acceptance of the rhythm.

> *It is right it should be so*
> *Man was made for Joy & Woe*
> *And when this we rightly know*
> *Thro the World we safely go.*
>
> William Blake (in Erdman, 1982, p. 493)

Peace could be said to be two-sided like a coin that I might carry in the palm of my hand. As I hold it, it becomes warm on both sides. Peace can be bitter sweet. In this way it is different than dichotomous concepts such as joy or sadness. This merging of sentiments was exemplified in William James' discussion of religious experience as a solemn state of mind (James, 1985). He indicates that, "A solemn state of mind seems to contain a certain measure of its own opposite in solution" (p. 47). Peace is a meeting place; something like a holy ground. It is a space between the tensions where 'enemies' embrace. Gibran in his well known book, *The Prophet,* speaks to the people about dichotomies and unity:

> *Verily all things move within your being in a constant half embrace, the desired and the dreaded, the repugnant and the cherished, the pursued and that which you would escape.*
>
> (Gibran, 1923, p. 43)

Peace is the handshake, the kiss, the edge where the halves meet, the whole embrace. At peace there is accord.

Unification of Peace

Participants in this study have identified unity or oneness in the experiences of peacefulness, as is exemplified in the story, *The Music Man* (p. 90). As the musician indicates:

> I just closed my eyes and became the music.

So deep is the lived-experience of unity that the young man has a sense of his 'self' as merging with the surroundings. He uses the word "ironic" to describe the peace experience as he is surprised to find peace during the stressful time of being a performer at a musical concert. Dichotomies melt away in a rhythm of accord. For this man, the harmony of music draws him to the accord that is peace.

Peace can reconcile one moment in time or a lifetime of moments, making all moments seem as one. In a peacefilled accord the experience can be one of congruence and completeness whereby everything fits. As in the story, *Egg-salad Sandwich* (p. 95) in a moment, discrete pieces of a life no longer float disconnected in space.

> I felt like I was a young girl again . . . and I could think of what lay ahead of us . . . yet not knowing where we'd end up . . . so exciting. And I felt like that again and it all fell into place for me.

Centered in a perfect balance between the back and forth rhythm of what has passed and what is to come, old becomes young in the unity of the moment. There is a lifetime of moments in a moment. Resting in the center the woman has a sense of peace about it all and tells others "how everything felt well with the world."

In a moment of peace a lifetime of rhythm can be apprehended as up and down not flat as in the 'flatline' of death. Peace invites a kind of holistic apprehension of the rhythm of life. The sentiment is, "I accept." Peace flows through the pain of death and it flows through the joy of vibrant new life.

Flowing in a Circle of Life

Cradling an infant, watching the earth come alive in springtime and return to sleep in the fall, such are the experiences that invite peace. Peace flows through the mysteries of life, through beginnings and endings, encircling, as though part of the circle of life. One woman's peaceful moment story exemplifies the peace of new life:

> The first moment that I held my infant granddaughter was a moment of profound peace. I had waited twenty-six years for a granddaughter

> and as I held her in my arms I felt creation. I whispered, "Granny is here" and I thought how I had helped create her.

The grandmothers' story was shared in a group setting where a chorus of consensus confirmed a feeling of peace in conjunction with a birth or in becoming a mother, a father, a grandparent or a significant other to a newborn. Feelings of peacefulness that accompanied the birth of animals was also described.

One woman indicated that, not only did she feel peace when close to creation but also when in the presence of purity and innocence. She made the following comments during an individual interview:

> For me being with children is like having a link to purity . . . something untouched and unspoiled. Hugging my children . . . hugging anyone's children, can bring me a warm peaceful feeling. Just this week I had such a moment with Tommy. He wanted me to see his fish and he took my hand with his tiny precious little soft hand and held onto however much of it as he could. That walk down the hallway with that little boy holding my hand . . . following that child . . . it was a wonderful moment for me.

This lighter shade of peace stands in contrast to the moments of peace which occur in times of grief and pain such as in the story, *The Cross* (p. 87), which occurs at the death of a loved one. Peace can find its stronghold in celebrations of death just as in celebrations of life as one woman pointed out in a discussion amongst research group members:

> Peace is not just about being happy. I remember sitting in church at Linda's funeral and feeling peaceful. I certainly would not say I was happy or joyful at the time. To the contrary.

The experience of peace within the context of death was also indicated by a participant who commented that peace is about "an acceptance of the circle of life." He shared the following story within a group context:

> My peaceful moment story is about the last moments with my mother . . . at her death . . . and I watched her take her last breath. It is customary in the aboriginal culture to make a circle . . . to gather the loved ones all around and we did this. Something happened in the room . . . a spiritual feeling . . . a sweet, fresh smell like in nature . . . in the room now. It was like I had come full circle. She gave me birth and I was there at her death . . . I felt she was at peace. The whole scene was peaceful.

I think, once again, about the two sided coin (that I referred to in my discussion of the unification of peace) now growing warmer in my hand and I feel the unity and wholeness of the circle. Peace is like the warmth moving freely through life and death and all that is in between. As for the man in the story above, peace may be at its existential best when it is present for life giving and life taking events because it contains an experience of completeness. It holds a kind of knowledge about life; a moment of understanding acquired experientially as opposed to being studied or read about. This is information of the heart, not the head. For a moment the circle of life is revealed and something is known about the beginning and the end. There may be a sense of 'endlessness', if only momentarily.

The Healing Touch

Peace can reconcile even the darkest hour as is apparent in the strong reassurance the woman received in the story, *The Cross* (p. 87), which took place at the death of her grandmother. The healing power of peace is also apparent in the story, *A Walk With Meesha* (p. 94), as the storyteller seeks solace from the pain of loss. In a moment of peace she is reconciled and comments:

> For those few seconds my heart lifted.

It is almost curious that peace should have such power of reconciliation as though it carries a healing touch in its gentle motion. One woman commented as she recounted the story of her father's death:

> I walked out of the church behind the coffin and not a tear was shed . . . my father was not there in that coffin. He was with God . . . at peace with God. How strange that in my time of greatest loss I was overcome by peace.

A powerful force, peace overcomes her and soothes her pain. Another man speaks of the powerful healing quality of peace as he struggles with loss of his first love and feels "a deep restlessness in my spirit." His story follows:

Lost Love

> I tried to bury myself in my work, digging in the garden until sweat poured down my brow. I slouched exhausted against a wall when I felt the wind blow slightly on my face, its cool fingers seemed to touch my face with a softness. I recall looking up toward the sky and seeing the breeze flow through the big oak tree that sat in the corner of the yard. And it was then that something swept through me with such power, yet such peace that I began to weep. At a time when love's fleeting powers seem to be tearing at my soul, when the inner pain numbs and wrenches, it was then that I sat with a peace that surpassed my understanding.

One young woman recalls a deep distress as her fiancee's life hung in the balance. In her story, *The Chapel,* she encounters the power of peace.

The Chapel

> I was only nineteen at the time and I was frantic that Patrick may die. I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat and I couldn't study for my exams. Though it wasn't the "cool" thing to do as a teenager on a Saturday afternoon, I found myself in a little chapel. A stranger walked in just as I knelt down and I became embarrassed and rushed out the door. I am now walking down the sidewalk feeling disappointed at myself because I had come with a purpose, to find some peace, and instead I run away. And suddenly I get a very, very calming feeling, out of the blue . . . very calming. It was like a sweep of calm and a very strong thought just wiped out any other thoughts that I was having. "It will be Okay . . . it will be Okay." That's all it said. And, in fact, it was.

The powerful healing calm sweeps through the young woman and "wipes out" her burden of pain. It is as though peace moves of its own power. Perhaps this kind of peace that overcomes, that sweeps through a person, answers the call of suffering and brings healing in its touch. One could say that a state of peacefulness is necessary to survival itself. The moment of peace vanquishes fear and life can again be met head on.

Summary of Rhythm of Accord

A Rhythm of Accord has been identified as a recurring theme in participants' stories of peace. The 'motion' of peace is presented as being similar to the rhythm of life itself. Life's vital tensions are envisioned as complementary rather than conflictual. The rhythm of accord in peace is described as creating a sense of unity or oneness as dichotomies seem to melt away. The rhythm of peace flows in a circle of life in that peacefulness has been connected to circumstances of life and of death. It has been suggested that a moment of peace may hold a kind of knowledge of life and offer a sense of completeness. In addition, the motion of peace seems to contain a healing 'touch' which reconciles pain and fear and allows us to face our lives fully and completely. The theme, Rhythm of Accord, has been presented as an integral dimension of the experience of personal peace. It is the first of the six themes that are being presented as more invariant dimensions of peacefulness experience.

(II) PROMISE IN PEACE

This theme is about a promise that is contained in experiences of peacefulness. By promise is meant "a word of honor, a vow, a covenant, a pledge" (Roget's College Thesaurus, 1995, p. 388). When a promise is made there is "a declaration that something will or will not be done or given" and there is also an "expectation" that a promise will be kept (Webster's College Dictionary, 1991, p. 1079). In this way a promise is like a pact which has also been defined as a covenant or treaty (p. 971). As indicated earlier, the word peace derives from the Latin *pax*, which means treaty of peace and is related to *pacisci* which means to covenant or agree from the word *pact* (Barnhart, 1988, p. 767; Klein, 1966-67, p.1143) and the words pact and promise share the same synonym; 'covenant'.

The preceding exploration of the language that is being used in connection to peace reveals that, in some way, a promise or a pact is part of the origin of the word peace. This lends credence to the inclusion of the theme, Promise in Peace, as a dimension of the personal peace experience. A word, however, is simply a word and is only representative of experience thus, at this time, I will turn to experience itself through the reflections and lived experience stories that lead to the identification of a 'Promise in Peace'. The theme will be explored under two sub-headings, It Will Be Okay and It Will Be Okay . . . No Matter What.

It Will Be Okay

The other day I received a phone call from my daughter who has recently moved from home to her own apartment. She was feeling distressed about a circumstance and told me the story that lead up to her agitation. Once finished she spoke these words:

Mom, please tell me it will be Okay.

And with the power that a mother can have in soothing a child I replied,

It will be Okay.

Promise?

Yes, I promise.

The words sounded very familiar to me. I recognized having spoken them many times before as I journeyed through motherhood with three children seeking reassurances.

Hush now everything is fine.

Shhh, it's 'Ohhhh kaaay'.

Sleep now for tomorrow will be bright.

There, there, you are fine.

You can do it.

It will all work out.

Everything is Okay.

And the child sleeps in peace and comfort. I think of my own childhood and how I might run to my mother or father for just such a reassurance. I recall how easily they could soothe with a kiss and a promise. So long as I believed in their love for me, I could believe in their promise of safety today and a hopefilled tomorrow. In trust, I accepted the promise. Therein was my peace as a child. Peace is like a good parent. I think of the peaceless children of sadness and fear who have no such reassurance; no firm ground upon which to stand in safety; no one to soothe their brow. They stand ever watchful in an unsafe world that teaches, "It is not Okay." Like the angry youth in the story, *At War* (p. 83), the stance is one of defence as an isolated boy takes on an unsafe world. The world, to him, holds little 'promise'.

Contained within a state of peace is a promise like whispered words, "It will be Okay" and with the acceptance of the promise comes the reassurance that "All is well" with the world as it is right now, in this moment. Things are as they should be. Just as the child can be made peaceful with reassuring words, so the adult finds a belief in the words to be at the core of the peace experience. In the story, *The Chapel* (p. 104), the young woman who is fearing for the life of her fiancee experiences the promise in peace as unmistakable. She repeats the words, "It will be Okay; it will be Okay." The promise, "a very strong thought," was accepted to the point where it "wiped out any other thoughts" and the woman experienced "a sweep of calm."

In the story, *The Cross* (p. 87) , the woman indicated, "It was a sign for me that it's Okay." Many peaceful moment stories submitted contained these same words. One man's story impressed as being very different from the rest in its speedy pace yet he lifted the story from his memory when asked to recount a peaceful moment in his life. His story, entitled *Man and Machine,* held the promise in common that all would be fine, that it's Okay:

> A sole drive through the southwestern United States restores my balance. Four days is sufficient, and my equilibrium parallels the

> topography. The drive begins to narrow my thoughts after a day in the trenches and my responsibilities have narrowed to the car and the journey. Running through the deep south with the car now humming and the stereo blaring, I begin to come in sync. It's Okay. Things get simple . . . the way they should be. The car is purring as I shoot the desert at 110 miles an hour. Mind focussed. Strategies for coming battles manifesting themselves. It's Okay!

A further example of the promise in peace occurred for one woman on her wedding day. In conversation with a group of people, she described the event. It seems most fitting to experience a glowing sense of peace on a day which holds so much promise for future love and happiness. What was different about her story was that she laughingly reported, "If anything could go wrong it did," recounting nightmarish difficulties with her maid of honor and the Chaplain, both obviously key to the ceremony itself. Her story ends with someone having to produce their own wedding band because hers was nowhere to be found and, ironically, with the concluding statement, "I experienced an unshakable serenity." She indicated to the surprised group that her wedding day, despite a comedy of errors, was her greatest moment of peace. She explained how, on that day, being married, she knew with absolute certainty that "Everything would be Okay." In the peace of that knowledge "nothing phased me" and she experienced "an unshakable serenity . . . I was unshakable"! On a day of promise she received an additional gift, the promise that is peace itself.

It Will Be Okay . . . No Matter What

The promise in peace is unique in that it is very powerful, taking on an unshakable quality. Participant stories told thus far have hinted at the strength of the promise. Perhaps stories which involve the greatest threat might best exemplify the strength of the reassurance in peace. The story, *The*

Accident (p. 85), (whereby the storyteller is tossed about in his vehicle and faces sure death) illustrates the depth of the promise. In *The Accident* the storyteller indicated that, having accepted the inevitability of his own death, he was at peace in the knowledge "everything is fine . . . everything is Okay." He describes the irony that, in the midst of chaos, he should experience such profound peace in the sense that "everything is well with the world," yet, "I was going to die."

This story exemplifies the power of the promise in peace which extends beyond or transcends the person in his or her mortality. In this way the promise in peace is unique. In peace, safety takes on a much deeper meaning rather like a sense of spiritual well-being and safekeeping. One woman speaks of this profound sense of safety despite being ill with cancer in the story, *The Journal*, which follows. Through a process of journaling she receives a very unexpected directive; one which guides her toward the peace of knowing everything will be all right . . . no matter what.

The Journal

> When I was first diagnosed with cancer everyone thought I would go into a dark room and stay depressed. This is what cancer people do after they're diagnosed, don't they? This is not what I did. My way is to try and speak to God. I had been writing in my journal for six weeks about my angry feelings. (One day) Instead of writing what I intended to write I wrote, "God is telling you" and then I became strangely alert and very emotional. I saw the words, "trust in me" then "write this." Now I am crying . . . I write, "Trust me. Follow me. The Path is right." I felt dazed and tired and I wanted it to stop.
>
> I would go back to my journal and expect the words not to be there. I tried to rid myself of the experience . . . wash it away. Now I accept that something very special happened whether it was my very inner subconscious coming out or it was God talking back to me for once, I

> don't know. But it was something. So (at the hospital) when I poised for my bad news, it was the words in my journal that I held as my strength. I thought, "You can tell me what you're going to tell me but, for some reason, I feel that I will be fine no matter what. And I'm not saying that I won't get sick . . . whatever the big picture is, I'll be fine."

In a further conversation she commented that she is gaining "a genuine sense of peace, contentment, that things will be Okay . . . that they are alright." As with many other participants who spoke about their peace experience, the two sentences went together. It will be and it is. She stated that doctors and nurses have commented on how well she is handling her illness. The woman continued with a question which she then answers herself:

> Is this coping?
>
> This is better than just getting along. It's a deeper sense of that.

A steadfast trust in life's promise marks experiences of peace. The promise in peace is unique in that it guarantees absolute safekeeping *no matter what*. One participant described peace in the following way:

> Peace is eternal security that transcends the temporal cataclysm.

In speaking of religious happiness, William James states, "a higher happiness holds a lower unhappiness in check" (1985, p. 47). This is reminiscent of the promise in peace in that what is outwardly problematic is inwardly permanently overcome.

Summary of Promise in Peace

Within the peace experience, is a promise that is similar to the experience that occurs when we hear the words, "It will be Okay," or "It is

Okay." When those words are heard, it is as though, for a moment, we are once again cradled in the warmth of a parent's loving arms. Like a kind touch on a furrowed brow it soothes and reassures. In a moment the world is righted. At peace the promise is accepted. It is not hollow or left half-believed 'blowing in the wind'. It finds its mark. The promise in peace is powerful and can transcend mortal limits as was seen in participant accounts of peace within the context of life-threatening events. Perhaps the words, "It will be Okay no matter what," best describe the unshakable character of the promise which can occur in a moment of peace.

> If I close my eyes and imagine peace I can almost see an angelic form hovering near, gently planting a promise in my ear: It's Okay, she whispers. It's Okay. And for a moment all is well with the world.

(III) INNER REJUVENATION

> *For in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning and is refreshed.*
>
> (Gibran, 1974, p. 53)

The theme, Inner Rejuvenation, is the third dimension of peacefulness that is being presented as a more invariant theme of the phenomenon. This topic will be discussed under two sub-headings: I Can Go On and Fully Alive; A Renascent Experience.

I Can Go On

A peaceful moment is an experience, lifted from experiential context and held in the memory. It can be discerned and described. Yet it seems not to last. I do not live each moment, each day in a state of peace. I know the constraints of time as I rush about. Because I am human I step where I have no right to tread as I march through life and others may be offended just as I feel offended if hurt by others. I do not feel worthy each step of the way and with this comes a moment that is less than peaceful. I do not live in perpetual agreement with myself and my world because I am not perfect and it isn't a perfect world. Or is it? The vital tensions of life seem to present themselves in the rhythm of life itself. Though peace can be characterized as having an accordant rhythm, the distinction in the 'crest and the fall' of the beat is apparent as one tastes the bitter . . . then the sweet . . . then the bitter . . . then the sweet. Retrospectively, a backward glance may create a peaceful mix. At the time it is what it is. One man makes the distinction in a moment of peace as he is fishing at dusk:

> For a moment, I am not Ben, the frantic, insecure, driven, intense, student, father, engineer who is doing so much it is killing him. I am simply in a boat with the trees and the rocks and the lake. And it's all painted by a soft setting sun and the call of a loon.

The other moments, outside of the boat, can be so lacking in peace that they are considered to be "killing" him. I, too, have experienced dark times, deep agonies, exhaustion and, like Ben I have said, "This is killing me, I've had it, I can't go on," yet I am very much alive. I do go on and I return to life seeing its beauty once again. How is it that I am brought back to life, not as one would gasp and breathe as though on life supports, but as one might gasp and 'breathe in' the splendor of life? In his book, *The Prophet,* Gibran (1974) refers to peace as, "that quiet urge which reveals your power" (p. 31). Perhaps moments of peace do more than just tease us and make us long for their return.

Could it be that in a moment of peace we experience a kind of re-birth whereby the strength of life is ours once again in an experience of inner rejuvenation? It could be said that life presents with a series of 'mini-deaths' as in those moments when we feel our spirit dying from repeated disappointment or when we go numb as in death rather than feel the pain. Life also seems to offer us moments that are there to replenish us. Whether born of our own natural inclination to survive as though nature's antidote, or experienced as being granted at the hand of a benevolent higher power, the life-giving capacity of the peaceful moment experience is palatable. As in the case of the woman whose experience of peace while journaling allowed her to feel "very, very much stronger" in the face of cancer, she is more than able to go on; she can go on in peace "no matter what" the prognosis. This is a very powerful kind of strengthening. As though, at peace, she is connected to a center of strength. For her, the core of the peace experience is God and God's power is placed within her.

In the story of the young boy sitting in the sunlight, *Good Morning Mr. Sun* (p. 77), the participant commented, "I was somehow different . . . I had been touched by the sun." As though beams of life's energy warm and soothe him, the boy, now an elderly man, still finds the tiresome burdens lifted when the sun shines on his face. It is as though the peace experience is a pocket of life's energy which is visited to gain power for "coming battles" as the man driving in his car indicated in the story, *Man and Machine* (p. 107). The power of peace is exemplified in these stories. Similarly in the story, *The Ski Trip* (p. 88), a skier who stops at the mountain top for a moment of solitude, is energized as she beholds the majestic beauty of the mountains. Of her peaceful moment she commented:

> I felt empowered . . . prepared to conquer the mountain below.

In this way, the skier rests in a moment of peace and is empowered in body and spirit. When my body is weary I may lay it down to rest. I do this so that I can continue to use it as a vehicle for my movement in life. There are things to do, places to go and people to see as I journey. Effort is required. Once rested, I can go on. Is peace like a resting point . . . a stop along the way? I think of how I feel refreshed when I wander through a wheat field or stroll along a hiking path. These are restful places for me and my 'soul' is somehow put at ease. My body and spirit come alive, not like the fatigued body that cannot go on until it sleeps as though lifeless. Bollnow (1961) refers to a dissertation by Stenzel which treats 'wandering' as a return to the origins and the inner rejuvenation that it brings. When at peace it is as though we have wandered into the special place of all happiness, energy and healing.

Sometimes when I enter water and move about in its cool fluidity I feel this peaceful energy. One woman told a story akin to my own experience:

> I jump into the water feeling tense and angry. I am tired but I force myself to take the first stroke. The cool water washes over me, washing away the tension. After swimming for some time I get a sense of my arms and legs, my entire body moving in complete harmony as though by itself. All fatigue and muscle strain are gone. I emerge feeling relieved and balanced, even cleansed. A sense of peace follows me to the change room. Briefly, I feel that I could go on forever.

Could it be said that she is resting? Her arms slice through the water, her legs kick at its resistance propelling her body through space. Yet at some point she becomes unaware that her body exerts itself. It moves as though powered from some other source outside of herself. And in her relinquishing of duty to operate the mechanisms of her body, she becomes centered in a perfect balance. At the center she is still. Her body behaves as though it has been rejuvenated as though it could continue its movements "forever." This is a 'deeper' experience than resting.

When at peace there is an effortlessness that is experienced. Things seem easier. A timelessness enters and the push and pull of temporal dictates seem to be washed away. There is no evaluative component of one's capacities, no questioning of future barriers. In reality a swimmer cannot go on forever. In a moment of peace we are neither plagued by doubt nor inhibited by the corporeality (physical realities) of our being. Thus unburdened, it is as though an energy flows through us and the sense is, "I can go on."

Fully Alive; A Renascent Experience

This study suggests that in a moment of peace we feel energized to go on. It is as though we drink the 'elixir' and can even feel the energy of youth or seem "young again" like the woman sharing a sandwich with her husband in the story, *Egg-salad Sandwich* (p. 95). When speaking of the peace she experiences in her life, she commented that as she gets older, "it doesn't take much to turn me on." I thought how vibrant and truly alive she was. Similarly, another participant identified a sense of vigor in a moment of peace, commenting, "life is strong and inviting." From participant accounts, when at peace the sensual connection is rich and powerful as with open ears we hear, with clear eyes we see, with sensitivity we feel all as we inhale life to its fullest. The breath in restores not only the body but the soul and the experience is one of being fully alive.

One participant, who was struggling with a life-threatening disease (see *The Journal*, p. 109) commented that the experience of peace goes much deeper than simply coping. This is an experience that has ontological relevance in its quality of restfulness yet moves beyond rest to rejuvenation. The word 'rejuvenation' itself means to restore youthful vigor; to make fresh or young again; to restore to a former state (Webster's College Dictionary, 1991, p. 1136). The word 'renaissance' comes to mind in attempting to articulate the rejuvenative quality of peacefulness. A 'renascent' experience, according to the same source, is one whereby there has been a re-birth; "a springing again into being or vigor" (p. 1140). This definition resonates with participant accounts of peaceful moments and with my own experience of peacefulness.

I experienced a deep sense of rejuvenation in a powerful moment of peace four summers ago. It was a time when I was tired from the battles of being a student. The chartering exams loomed over me as a major step toward becoming a psychologist. I was fearful as I'd heard many failed. I was tired from long nights of study and I was decidedly in a victim-stance. Life seemed unfriendly and dull . . . if I had one at all. This was the state of my damaged spirit as I headed out to our cottage at Pigeon Lake for yet another bout of reading, writing and mental stretching. My world was narrow, consisting predominantly of words on a page. Energy check? Depletion!

Watching Casey Fish

> It's fall at Pigeon Lake and I am sitting outside on the deck. A box overflowing with study materials sits beside my chair. One folder is open on my lap and a pen and highlighter are poised for action. My mind is racing. Casey and I have snuck off to our cottage on a school day so I could be alone with my "important work." He put up no fuss because his greatest love as a 12 year old boy is to fish . . . just by himself . . . to cast and wait . . . cast and wait . . . and a bite! For years he does this and then, with the swiftness of a 'pro', and ever so carefully, he releases his catch . . . and watches it swim away.
>
> I watch him now, a solitary figure a stone's throw from me, in a small green boat gliding on the glassy lake . . . a shadow really, cast by the deep gold of a late afternoon's autumn light. There is a ripple following his line as it trails behind the boat. The oars dip expertly and quietly into the water. His eyes remain fixed on the line as his arms move rhythmically, gently urging the boat forward at exactly the right pace to keep the fish interested.
>
> My eyes rest on the line which has become a shimmering thread of sun-lit water drops. I watch . . . one drop . . . slip down its silky path to the water and I am immersed . . . deeply immersed in the magic of this moment. I am overcome with emotion . . . and deep, deep gratitude.

> Thank-you for this boy . . . and thank-you for this life . . . and its not about "my important work" anymore. I think only that I am the luckiest person in the whole world . . . to be here . . . right now . . . alive . . . so very alive . . . resting in this perfect moment. This is what it's all about.

How I moved (or was delivered) from a burdened mind to the shimmering drops on the fishing line, is something I can't explain. I have enjoyed many restorative moments over the past few years as I have engaged in my doctoral studies, but this particular moment was most significant in terms of inner rejuvenation. The gentle glow of life that late fall afternoon still reaches me through the tunnel of time and reminds me that I am truly alive today as I write. Awake, not asleep, the peaceful world is alive and vibrant. Peace is not passivity but rather a full participation in the moment.

The inner rejuvenation that is contained within the peace experience offers strength to go on. It complements darker nights of the soul and in some cases it rests in the darkness replenishing itself. It is restful but it is greater than rest. As though re-born in a moment of peace, I am new to the world and it to me. This sentiment is clearly articulated in the following passage.

> *We shall not cease from exploration*
> *And the end of all our exploring*
> *Will be to arrive where we started*
> *And know the place for the first time.*
>
> T. S. Eliot (Beck, 1980, p. 808)

Must we experience peace*lessness* to know the joy of peace? Singer and song-writer, Joni Mitchell (1996) reminds us "You don't know what you've got 'til it's gone" (in her album, *Hits*) and sad as this may be there is truth to her words. But there is hope, of course, because we can be re-awakened to life in moments of peace. With one deep breath we can be re-born, perhaps a little bit wiser.

A poem written by Edna St. Vincent Millay exemplifies the experience of re-birth and rings true to life in its portrayal of death and re-birth of the human spirit. As with the peace experience, an inner rejuvenation characterizes the poem entitled, *Renascence* (as spelled in poem). A few lines from this lengthy poem have been selected (for complete version see Untermeyer, 1955, pp. 261-266).

The poet begins by indicating the limited capacity of her vision prior to the *renascence* experience. Like the peace*less* woman in the story, *On Guard* (p. 82) she is trapped in a small world.

All I could see from where I stood
Was three long mountains and a wood
. . . . Over these things I could not see
These were the things that bounded me
. . . . And all at once things seemed so small
My breath came short, and scarce at all.

She becomes frightened, caught in the mortal coil, and hears:

The ticking of eternity

The anxiety of 'being' itself engulfs her (see Heidegger, 1962 for discussion of 'angst'). She sees only the pain in the world and this is like a heavy burden blinding her to life's beauty.

Mine was the weight
of every brooded wrong
A man was starving in Capri
He moved his eyes and looked at me.

She lies on the earth in her anguish which gives way under her 'weight' and she sinks down:

Deep in the earth I rested now;
Cool is its hand upon the brow
And soft its breast beneath the head
Of one who is so gladly dead.

She values her 'escape'. She can now be blind to life's pain and believes this is the answer. But as she is laying there the rain begins to fall and she listens with a new appreciation:

. . . . seemed to love the sound far more
Than ever I had done before.

Then she listens with a longing:

How can I bear it; buried here,
While overhead the sky grows clear
. . . .O God, I cried give me new birth,
And put me back upon the earth!

A wave of black rain washes away her grave:

And all at once the heavy night
Fell from my eyes and I could see
A drenched and dripping apple-tree,
A last long line of silver rain,
A sky grown clear and a blue again.

She experiences the world in a new way:

Ah! Up then from the ground sprung I

> *And hailed the earth with such a cry*
> *As is not heard save from a man*
> *Who has been dead and lives again.*
> *About the trees my arms I wound;*
> *Like one gone mad I hugged the ground.*

The 'renascence' is complete:

> *I know not how such things can be!*
> *I breathed my soul back into me.*

As in the poem, when at peace we may emerge from whatever depth denies our strength and once again, encounter a life that is strong and inviting. Feeling fully alive and like a person "gone mad" we watch as a tiny drop of water on a fishing line slips down its silky path . . . and we are immersed in the magical moment. So long as we dip into the power that is peace we can breathe the words, "I can go on," not as one who has seen it all before but as one who, once again, knows the place for the first time.

Summary of Inner Rejuvenation

Inner Rejuvenation has been presented as a more invariant dimension in a collective signification of the personal peace experience. From participant stories it seems that peaceful moments offer a particular strength or energy to face less kind moments in life. In an unburdening or "washing away" of tension there is a sense of "I can go on" and this may be so complete that the feeling is, "I can go on forever." Greater than resting or simply coping, peacefulness is more like a 'renascent' experience whereby there is a springing back into being or vigor. A sense of being fully alive has been reported as being a common experience of persons at peace. Through the inner rejuvenation of personal peace we become free to participate fully in the beauty of the world around us.

(IV) SWEET SURRENDER IN PEACE

> *It is at this moment of total surrender that the light begins to dawn. We expect to hit bottom, but instead we fall through a trap door into a bright new world.*
>
> (Shakti Gawain, 1988, not paginated)

'Sweet Surrender in Peace' has been identified as a significant dimension of experiences of peacefulness. This theme is discussed under two sub-headings: A Different Kind of Surrender and Peace and Personal Power. The section closes with a summary of the theme.

A Different Kind of Surrender

How can surrender, which implies submission and passivity be sweet? The word 'surrender' means "to deliver up or yield to the possession or power of another on demand or under duress" (Webster's College Dictionary, 1991, p. 1345). In war, surrender can be bitter. To surrender, according to the above source, also means to give (oneself) up to some influence, course, emotion. One woman tells of "a total surrender" in a moment of peace.

Sweet Surrender

> I'm a wife, mother and grandmother and very involved in my family's lives. Their stresses are my stresses, their problems, my problems. One day last summer I was particularly worried about a family member. I stepped outside in my back yard and sat on the deck among our majestic trees. The squirrels were happily chattering, the birds flying from tree to tree and there were my favorite robins looking for worms. Our dog Bud, always intuitive to his people's feelings, lay at my feet, enjoying my company, not pushing for his usual walk or his game of chasing ball. It was a beautiful day. I realized that I had my own

> sanctuary, my own cathedral, right there in my back yard. I allowed this simple scene to flood my whole being. I said a prayer of thanks and I felt God's presence in everything around me. I don't know how long I sat there savoring this wonderful peace. The realization came to me that I can't be all things to all people. I can't fix everything. The total surrender was a healing experience and I was able to say with more conviction than ever before, "Thy will dear Lord, not mine."

The woman experiences peace as she 'gives over the control,' consistent with yet another dictionary definition. Peace may entail *recognition of the authority or claims, and acceptance of protection of a king or lord* " (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989, p. 384). With trust and without resentment, a struggle is relinquished; a burden handed over. There is gratitude in this surrender. She loses only that which impoverishes her and in return she is granted the gift of peace. She no longer fights for a power that is not hers to possess as omnipotence is returned to its rightful place. Her relationship with herself is marked by a satisfaction felt deep in her soul. There is total acceptance. No need to be what she is not. No longer imprisoned by worry and troublesome thoughts, she is freed. There is no devastation in the wake of this surrender, no price to pay, no reason to mourn. In her peace the beauty of the world reveals itself. From her story the sweetness of the surrender is apparent.

What is meant by the word, 'sweet'? According to the Webster's College Dictionary (1991) in addition to its obvious appeal to a sense of sugary taste or a melodious sound, it can mean amiable, kind or gracious as a person or action; pleasing, agreeable, delightful (p. 1350). A sweet surrender, then, would be an agreeable, pleasant relinquishing as when one hands over a responsibility that has been burdensome. The handing over or giving up which is experienced in peace is sweet because it eases rather than burdens; soothes rather than aggravates. The necessary condition is trust.

The findings of this study suggests that the compulsion to conquer, to know all, to control and to overtake are absent in moments of peace. Holmes (1949), who writes about living peaceful lives, suggests that those who live serene lives accept that the future is unknowable and thus they surrender the need to know. Unrest and constant striving are characterized by a need to seek explanation of that which is beyond the realm of understanding. As Merleau-Ponty (1962) suggests, "The world and reason are not problematic. We may say, if we wish, that they are mysterious, but their mystery defines them: there can be no question of dispelling it by some 'solution', it is on the hither side of all solutions" (p. 20).

Peace and Personal Power

At the start of this chapter the story was told about a man who came near to death as he was hit by an oncoming vehicle (*The Accident*, p. 85). His story clearly exemplifies a handing over of power in peace.

> There wasn't anything I could do. I was in God's hands. There wasn't a care anymore. In that moment I gave up living. I couldn't live anymore. It was out of my control.

This total surrender of life itself was described as,

> . . . one of the most peaceful experiences that I have ever had.

Paradoxically, once he realized that he was going to live he resumed responsibility and applied the necessary effort.

> I immediately set about to figure out how to get out, to make sure I stayed alive. I thought, "Death is Okay but I want to live too."

He recognized what was within his own power and acted upon his knowledge. This is clearly different than what transpired for him in his moment of surrender when he handed over power, fully accepting his own inevitable mortality. Yet he remains bothered:

> I could see the other vehicle burning . . . helpless . . . wanting to help. Five people in that car and there wasn't anything I could do. That haunts me.

Years later, the peace*less* fragments of the experience remain as do the peaceful aspects each having much to do with placement of power, perception of capacity to act and acceptance of that which is beyond human control. A feeling of helplessness accompanies the peace*less* aspects of the man's experience. This self-recriminating feeling is absent in a sweet surrender having been replaced with the wisdom of knowing that a certain act is humanly impossible at that given moment and in that particular circumstance. The choice to act does not exist, thus there is no personal admonishment for failing to do so. From the standpoint of existentialism, one could say that personal agency, or the capacity to act on one's own behalf, (and thus existential guilt) is not an issue (for similar view see Heidegger, 1962).

In the language of counselling we speak of *letting go* of that which binds us to our pain and in some instances it may be about letting go of fear. For the man in the story, *The Accident*, in letting go of life he relinquished fear of death. Perhaps, in time, he will be able to let go of the painful aspects of his experience which remain in his memory. He may reach a point of agreement which accepts the joy and the sadness in a rhythm of accord thus making his peace with what occurred. Though the sweet surrender theme is about surrendering of power it is also about empowerment in that a choice may be made to let go of some aspect of experience; to make peace with something.

Surrendering painful aspects of a life story is not a simple task and, as Epston and White (1992) remind us, there is a tenacious quality to oppressive stories. Take, for example, a story of a woman who lost her daughter to a violent criminal act. She re-lives what her daughter experienced every anniversary and then some. She said, "I go on because the only other choice I have is to die." Survival is a hopeful thing and she chooses life. She works hard to let go of the horrific event which occurred; to let go of the pain and make room for some peace in her life. For now it's about survival or coping. This is different than living in peace although it may be a forerunner. Letting go of painful thoughts or experiences seems to be a precursor to peace. Is it possible that there are degrees of peace? Can we be at peace with one aspect of our life and not another?

In 1992 I wrote a poem in response to my own need to let go of a particularly painful life experience.

A wrinkle forms on my brow
Planted somehow
Furrows of anger . . . discontent
Anguished hours spent.

An angel's kiss upon my brow
Soothed somehow
Seeds of love free to grow
Letting go.

The notion of letting go and its applicability to the experience of peacefulness is further exemplified in a dream which one participant recounts:

> I was trekking in Nepal, which in itself should have been enough to bring me to peace, yet I was troubled. I had left my children at home in good hands with Sue but was worrying about them. Are they Okay . . . I wonder what they are doing . . . you know . . . fretting. This was disrupting my peace. Then, one night when I was asleep in my tent, I

> dreamt that Sue and I were driving in a car. The car was flying in the air but it was on a rope. The rope broke off and suddenly the car was floating. We were free! It just snapped . . . and suddenly I knew, "everything is Okay." The worrying stopped. The whole stress thing disappeared. The next day I felt peaceful as I trekked through the magnificent countryside.

Worries are surrendered in a powerful image that physically severs the tie between person and concern in a vivid letting go. The disconnection results in images of flying and floating freely in space. Burdens lifted, the experience is one of weightlessness.

The story, *Floating in Space* (p. 92), further exemplifies the peace of letting go. The young man in the story experiences "complete serenity" as he lets go of the sandy bottom of the ocean and floats aimlessly. By bending his knees and grabbing his ankles he is rocked "up and down" by the waves. With eyes closed and under the water he is undisturbed as "he couldn't hear anything on the surface." For this young man in his moment of peace he is unconcerned with being in control or applying power. As the ocean cradles him, it is as though he is being held by something greater than himself. As in the dream, peace is experienced as a physical letting go, "I was weightless and with my eyes closed, floating in space." This is not unlike the spiritual surrender indicated by the woman in her backyard or by the man who experiences a close call with death.

What is the experience of personal power when at peace? As discussed earlier in this study, peace acts as an inner rejuvenation and is powerful in and of itself. Are we, then, like empty vessels waiting to be re-filled with glorious peace? Participants have spoken of peace this way as it "washes over me" or "drifts in" unexpectedly or "suddenly is upon me" or "overpowers all other thoughts" and is almost "overwhelming." Yet the power to act and make choices is present. I return to a comment made by the woman in the story, *Sweet Surrender* (p. 121): "I allowed this simple scene to flood my whole being." Even in a moment where power is handed over, the woman makes a choice to *allow* peace to enter. A mood of receptivity marks the experience.

I adhere to a Humanistic Psychology which, through its existential foundations, emphasizes the power to choose and to change through ones own efforts (Frankl, 1959; Heidegger, 1962; May, 1983; Rogers, 1961; Tillich, 1952). From this perspective, the person is an active agent in the attainment of experiences that could be called peaceful. Nonetheless, I am drawn to the reality that though I am free to choose much of what occurs in life, I am not completely free. Strangely, it is with this understanding that I retain the greatest freedom, become empowered and experience the sweetness that is peace. In understanding my limits I honor my capabilities thus I find out more about who I am. Perhaps the greatest challenge is to know what I can and cannot do, to stand graciously on the fine line.

> *God grant me serenity*
> *To accept the things I cannot change*
> *Courage to change the things I can*
> *And Wisdom to know the difference.*
> Serenity Prayer (Al-anon Family Group, 1981)

Summary of Sweet Surrender in Peace

The theme of Sweet Surrender has been identified as significant to the personal peace experience. It centers about the issue of power and control. A different kind of surrender than is typically defined characterizes this dimension of peacefulness in that it is an agreeable, pleasant relinquishing of the need to control. The surrender is sweet in that it involves an unburdening and what is gained is a sense of freedom. Though, in one respect, it is related to knowing personal limitations, it is also about empowerment and self-knowledge. The notion of letting go is significant to personal peace and involves being an active participant in gaining access to peaceful experiences. There are degrees of freedom and of choice and it is easier to let go of some things than of others. In this way there may be varying degrees of peace. Both personal limits and capabilities are honored in the sweet surrender of peace.

(V) KINSHIP IN PEACE

A fifth more invariant theme of the phenomenon of peacefulness is being presented as 'Kinship in Peace'. This dimension focuses on the relational aspect of peace which, broadly speaking, is presented within the context of three relational realms of experience: personal, interpersonal and transpersonal. An overview of the following text is being provided at this time.

The section begins with the heading, The Relational Dimension of Peace; Connected in Love. This is a general discussion of the Kinship in Peace theme and introduces the relational aspect of the peace experience. A more specific dialogue related to each realm of relationship is then presented.

A discussion of the first relational realm of the Kinship In Peace follows under the title: (1) At Peace with Myself. Within this sub-theme the heading, Experiencing the Accordant Self, appears in text and this aspect of self is discussed in three sections: In Touch With My True Self, Feeling I Am Worthy and Feeling Complete and Whole. This is followed by a presentation of participant symbols of peace as these pertain to the topic, At Peace with Myself and is entitled, Symbols of Peace and the Connection to Self. The section concludes with a summary of the sub-theme, At Peace with Myself.

The second relational realm is presented under the heading, At Peace With Others. A discussion of this sub-theme follows. The section is then further divided under two sub-headings: Symbols of Peace and Connection to Others, and Summary of At Peace with Others.

The third relational realm of peacefulness is presented under the heading, The Spiritual Connection. Following a discussion of peace in this relationship realm are two further sub-headings: Symbols of Peace and the Spiritual Connection, and Summary of The Spiritual Connection.

The text then includes a section entitled, Reflecting on the Three Relational Realms of Peace, which is organized under three sub-headings: Self and the Personal Realm of Peace, Self and the Interpersonal Realm of Peace and Self and the Transpersonal Realm of Peace. A section summary concludes the presentation of Kinship in Peace as a more invariant theme of peacefulness.

The Relational Dimension of Peace; Connected in Love

If we shoot a bird, we wound ourselves.

(C. Day Lewis, 1961, p. 35)

These words of a poet carry the truth of our connection to all things. We may be alone at times or wish to separate ourselves if just for a moment *of peace* but are we ever really in isolation? In the quote above, Lewis reminds us that we become attached to things through our feelings about them. In peace, what is the nature of the attachment and to whom or what are we attached? The theme, Kinship in Peace, explores the nature of the connection within three realms of relational experience; personal, At Peace With Myself; interpersonal, At Peace With Others and transpersonal, The Spiritual Connection (at peace with God, Higher Power, the Spirit).

The concept of peace is truly a relational one in that it begs the question, at peace with whom . . . with what? I am at peace with something or someone when I am at peace. I can be at peace with myself, with my family, my friends, my work, my life, my death, my God and, in its pristine form, at peace with it all. I may even be at peace with one aspect and not another. How fortunate the person whose peace encircles life, permeating all that is touched! We are connected to the things of life through our senses. What does the hand of peace look like? And what do the eyes of peace see? We are joined in heart and in spirit. What is the nature of a peaceful union?

Ultimately we are alone. It is an existential truth that we are constantly facing our own aloneness. And it is true, in a way, that we come into this world alone and leave it that way. As with all things the statements are open to the hermeneutics of interpretation and to the existential philosophical wisdom that we exist in the world not apart from it (Gadamer, 1975, 1996; Heidegger, 1962). There are those who say we are never truly alone, like Buber (1958) who states that we live in a kind of in-between, between the I and the thou; there is always another. A sense of never being alone when at peace is exemplified in the statement of Elizabeth Kubler Ross:

> *In order to be at peace it is necessary to feel a sense of history - that you are both a part of what has come before and part of what is yet to come. Being thus surrounded, you are not alone; and the sense of urgency that pervades the present is put in perspective.*
>
> (Kubler-Ross, in Hague, p. 46)

Christopher St. John Sprigg (also known as Christopher Caudwell) in his book, *Illusion and Reality,* (1947) identifies a history of emotions and experience which is shared in common by thousands of generations. Though he speaks about collective emotion within a context of art and poetry, which he indicates organizes these emotions, his comments are relevant to the current discussion of kinship in peace. For example, the communal spirit is present in Caudwell's words:

> *Emotions, generated collectively, persist in solitude so that one man, alone, singing a song, still feels his emotion stirred by collective images. He is already exhibiting the paradox of art -*

> *man withdrawing from his fellows into the world of art, only to enter more closely into communion with humanity.(p. 27).*

As though amongst a communion of ghosts, we are never alone according to these writers and to others, like Jung (1964), who speak of our collective archetypal heritage which joins us in a communal experience of eternal truths. For Caudwell and other poetic figures such as Lewis, an imaginative response occurs which is referred to as aesthetic emotion; a response which so often includes the feeling of recognition and gives to things almost a remembrance. Perhaps I am taking the notion of the connection too far or have leapt ahead of myself as I introduce the theme 'Kinship in Peace'. Nonetheless the deep rootedness being explored is related to the peace experience and will undoubtedly resurface at some point in this discussion of the relational aspect of peace.

In the peace experience, from participant accounts, the nature of the connection (or joining) is one of love and kinship to all things. It is with love that we touch the world around us and with love that we are received. By kinship is meant family relationship; relationship by nature, qualities; likeness; affinity (Webster's College Dictionary, 1991, p. 746). In peace we celebrate our aloneness in union with others; our solitary lives in community, our self-hood in our belonging; our difference in our sameness. It is with an ethic of care that we approach our world and from our connectedness to the world that we grow to be who we are as individuals (for similar view see Gilligan, 1982). A profound experience of what it means to be intimately connected yet alone has been noted in moments of peace. One man's story exemplifies this experience.

> I stood facing the mighty Atlantic Ocean, having crept out onto the rocks which would have been covered during high tide. My eyes followed each wave . . . a rhythmic flow . . . rising and falling . . . washing up on shore . . . retreating . . . spraying a fine mist as the foam

> met my rocky perch. In that moment time stood still. I was as though in a trance, fixed at a certain place and time in the universe. I was alone in myself, tunneled by my own experience and oblivious to others who may have been close by. A distinguished satisfaction filled my soul; a tranquility that seemed to know no bounds. In my closeness to the natural world I felt its spiritual power and I found myself humbled yet satisfied as I stood witness to the Creator's majestic expression of Himself. I was alone . . . with Him . . . an intimacy that speaks of connectedness to God.

The man in the story is alone in himself yet, through the things of the natural world, he feels intimately connected to his "Creator". Many stories of peaceful moments exemplify a loving orientation toward nature. One elderly gentleman talked about the sense of peace that he feels when he walks in a small wilderness near his city home, "a place where my body releases all tension."

> Although it is a short path in the ravine I walk very slowly. I am attracted to the smallest thing. I see beauty in the dry and withered branch lying there, the silvery patterns of the bark, the lines and shapes of the patina. Each tree is different, like people. I recognize each tree and know it is the same tree that I visited last time. Once there I am less important than my surroundings. I am almost out of myself in freedom and I feel that I am part of this nature.

A strong sense of belonging accompanies his humble personification of nature's beings yet this is an attachment which is felt as complete freedom. The space around him is pungent with a mood; a disposition of receptivity permeates his being. Open to the world peace enters and troubling thoughts are carried away. So strong are his sentiments of kinship that he feels as though he is outside of himself and one with his surroundings. This is very different from the inwardization which occurs at times of pain that Gadamer (1996) has spoken of. This is a reaching outward, extending oneself beyond self, and is similar to accounts given by others, when at peace. Take, for example, the following participant comment:

> For a moment my surroundings have taken me out of myself and made me one with them.

What happens to the *self* in this experience of merging with one's surroundings? One individual commented of his peaceful moment, "it's not about me anymore." Kahlil Gibran clearly expresses this sentiment in the following quotation:

> *The trees were budding, the birds were singing - the grass was wet - the whole world was shining. And suddenly I was the trees and the flowers and the birds and the grass - and there was no I at all.*
>
> (Kahlil Gibran, 1975)

Reminiscent of the harmony that is experienced when listening to an orchestra, when at peace it is as though one sweet tone joins others until there is only the music. The young musician in the story, *The Music Man* (p. 90), described a peaceful moment in this way. He indicates, "I just closed my eyes and became the music." What is my relationship with myself when I am at peace? Do I disappear altogether?

> *O chestnut tree, great rooted blossomer*
> *Are you the leaf the blossom or the bole?*
> *O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,*
> *How can we know the dancer from the dance?*
>
> (W. B. Yeats, in Beck, 1980, p. 715)

(1) At Peace with Myself

'At Peace with Myself' is the first sub-theme of 'Kinship in Peace'. It centers on the connection one has with 'self' during moments of peace, and thus it is the most personal of the three relationship realms that will be discussed. This has to do with the *mortal self* in that it is the self that understands his or her finiteness, that looks back at the form peace takes in the person of self. This is not to say that when I am at peace with myself I am self-conscious as one who is embarrassed or makes self the center of focus. To the contrary, as indicated above, when at peace it is as though there is no "I" at all. This special way that 'I' is present, where 'I' is just *there,* will be discussed later in this chapter with reference to Gadamer (1996). Being at peace with myself is a possible human experience and thus I have some knowledge or awareness of my 'self', or of 'I', relative to the experience.

What does it mean to be at peace with myself? In the language of psychology it can mean many things. For example, one could say that in a moment of peace I become perfectly integrated like Eric Erikson's mature adult who, on a developmental path, has integrated values, yielding peace (Erikson, 1959, 1968). An integrated person is a unified being (Hague, 1995). In Hague's study of evolving spirituality, he states that the highest levels of human development offer a new coming together. He states, "It is as though the spiral of development ever expands to greater and greater circumferences but ever swirls inward too, toward greater integration and the peace that, they say, always dwells at the eye of the cyclone" (p. 118). He adds that perhaps human beings can go from "an integration of simplicity, the placid child, to the integration of complexity, the person of peace." From this perspective a moment of peace might be a moment of 'integrating' and a lasting experience of peace would move beyond an experience of color, sound and smell to an integration of a life.

Maslow (1971, 1977) and Rogers (1961), in the humanistic tradition, might consider a person at peace to be fully functioning, self-actualized, though Rogers is more inclined to consider the person as self-actualiz*ing*, in a process of becoming, while Maslow's self-actualized person has arrived. Rogers refers to psychological congruence as occurring when the real self, the perceived self and the ideal self become consistent. In an integration of the various parts of the self one could say that there is an experience of accord or an *accordant self*, which would be in keeping with the language of peace.

Another way of looking at the person as peaceful would be to consider the primacy of meaning and purpose in life as did Victor Frankl (1959, 1978) who would likely agree that a person at peace has found some satisfaction in their search for meaning, otherwise they would remain ever restless looking to find their purpose in life. When at peace one might also expect to find a congruence between what is valued in life and how a life is acted out. One participant's comments were particularly revealing in this regard:

> To me being at peace is . . . I'm Okay . . . with most of the things in life that are important. Because I can still be aggravated about having to get groceries or make supper or if someone bugs me . . . but if I'm Okay with what is really important in my life . . . like taking care of my mother . . . have I done the right things for my children? . . . do I treat people well? . . . then I'm Okay.

This woman, who I will refer to as Sharon, made a further comment which suggests that she has arrived at a peaceful place within herself. When asked if she looks up to anyone in particular as an exemplar of peace she replied:

> Why would I ever want to be anyone other than myself?

One could say that she lives authentically, in accord with her own beliefs, and in doing so she experiences a satisfaction with who she is as a person. And who she is may be her 'higher self' in its ethic of care and authenticity.

Being connected to one's higher self has been an important consideration in the writings of many psychologically and spiritually minded authors (Borysenko, 1993; James, 1985; Maslow, 1977). A humanistic approach sees the true nature of humankind in a positive light, as good and forward moving. From the perspective of Taoist philosophy (Welch, 1957) the higher self would be a return to humankind's original nature which is considered to be kind and mild, founded on goodness and simplicity. From this perspective, it is only through reaction to societal pressure that humankind has become aggressive.

There is an abundance of psychological language which in, some way, is relevant to an experience of being at peace with myself such as the following theoretical aspects of the self: self-esteem, self-worth, self-knowledge, self-efficacy, self-valuation, self-reliance and authenticity to name a few. It is possible to talk about being at peace with the self from any or all of these starting points. For example, the results of this study suggest that when I am at peace with myself there is a sense of valuing self. Using the first person singular to describe peace with self would engender a series of "I" statements similar to the following:

> I esteem myself. I am in touch with my true nature which is my higher self and thus I know myself better in a moment of peace than I did in the moment before. I exist in trust and feel connected to my world as a valued piece of the great puzzle, thus I have an important part to play. I am able to fulfill "my part" and thus have a sense of my own competence. In this way I can count on my self as I count on others. Most significantly, I exist in a loving relationship with myself and the world that I live in.

This constellation of descriptors belongs to what can be called the *accordant self,* the self at peace with itself. The above features are subsumed under three main aspects of the experience of being 'At Peace with Myself': (1) In Touch with My True Self, (2) Feeling I am Worthy, and (3) Feeling Complete and Whole

Experiencing the Accordant Self

(1) In Touch with My True Self:

To be "in touch" with something suggests that there is a close connection as though so near that it can be touched. With reference to the self, the connection that is being described is like self-knowledge and assumes the application of the self-reflective capacity that is our human inheritance. From the above discussion of higher self and in keeping with a humanistic philosophy which guides this research, to be in touch with the true self means to connect with one's nature as good, kind, forward moving and competent; the self that is prepared to make choices in support of the deportment of human agency. To be an 'agent' is to have the power to act (Webster's College Dictionary, 1991, p. 26). It follows that when I am true to myself I am making choices, right or wrong. I am acting out my humanity.

In keeping with the humanistic perspective, being in touch with oneself assumes an orientation that is weighted on the side of the healthy, positive functioning self. To use a metaphor, a flower turns itself to the sun and reaches deeply in the soil for the water that gives it life, thus it is naturally oriented toward growth. Because of human choice, I can take the flower and plant it where it will not grow just as I can make choices in my life that are destructive. When I am connected to my true self it is as though I choose to face the sun, to orient myself in a positively growth enhancing direction. This 'weighted choice' is the connection being described in "being in touch with my true self" as a dimension of the *accordant self.*

The *accordant self* experiences his or her own true identity. This is the person who listens to the inner wisdom, who reaches for the spirit within, who is true to him or her self, who follows his or her own heart. In the reflections of the participant, Sharon, who lived in accord with her own beliefs (indicated earlier in this section), her accordant self is also an authentic self. According to Webster's College Dictionary, authentic means not false or copied; genuine; real. In addition, the words reliable and trustworthy are given as synonyms (p. 92). Applied to personhood or the art of living, authenticity means being true to oneself and one's world. "A person is authentic in that degree to which his being in the world is unqualifiedly in accord with the givenness of his own nature and of the world" (Bugental, 1965, pp. 31-32).

There are many meanings for authenticity that have been put forth in psychological thought and these vary with the particular worldview of the authors. Rahilly (1993) studied authentic experience and summarized many of the extant perspectives in the literature. From her study she described 14 constituents of authentic experience. Of significance to the present discussion on the *accordant self,* Rahilly identified a sense of being fully present and aware of self (in a way that involved "a dissolution of everyday egos") and a heightened awareness of others who were involved in a particular authentic experience (p. 65). This aspect of authentic experience appears to be particularly applicable to the sub-theme, At Peace with Myself. To engage in a comparative analysis between authentic experience and the experience of being at peace with oneself is not the intent of this study. It is however, relevant to note that authenticity is likely a significant component of the *accordant self.*

Rahilly reminds us that experience is no less authentic by being negative in nature which may be the key to subtle differences between the peaceful self and the authentic self. I may, for example, physically assault someone because I am angry and believe the other deserves to be taught a lesson. In one sense this could be considered an authentic act because it fits with a momentary belief. In another sense it could be said that this was a psychologically defensive maneuver and the true self would not have acted this way. The fine lines between the *accordant self* and authenticity become blurred in this way.

Once again, being in touch with the true self emphasizes the connection to the higher self. As exemplified in the preceding comments of the participant, Sharon, the connection to self is not one that disregards the connection to the world or those in it. Rather it encompasses the ethic of care and the honoring of what could be considered to be higher values such as described by Gilligan (1982) and Maslow (1977). To use a text analogy, that which is meaningful in a life becomes integral to the authoring of a life script and, because life is the performance of text (Bruner, 1986) being at peace with the self encompasses acting in accordance with what is held to be meaningful. As in Sharon's case, when at peace with the self one's true identity is revealed and is acted upon. The true identity has been said to be unchanging, to be a spiritual identity that is love (Borysenko, 1993; Chopra, 1993; Jampolsky, 1993; Williamson, 1992). From this perspective a return to peace would be a return to the true 'self' which would also be a return to love.

(2) Feeling I am Worthy:

Integral to the experience of the *accordant self* is a sense of one's own worthiness. Being 'At peace with Myself' is about closeness rather than distance. It involves an effortless being in touch with one's true worth. This is different than being the subject of evaluation. This is a direct and primitive contact with value and meaningfulness. In sensing that 'I' am of value, it is as though there is no 'I' at all. As in Gadamer's comments related to health as enigma (see chapter two) when all is running smoothly the focus is not on me anymore as I reach out beyond myself. Though not the focus in moments of peace, the *valued self* is somehow just *there*. As Gadamer states, "in our being given over to the world, in our state of openedness and openness, in our spiritual receptivity for everything, whatever it may be, we are also there ourselves" (Gadamer, 1996, p. 75). Gadamer comments that this 'presence' doesn't refer to time in the narrow sense of a series of temporal points but rather to a 'presence' which fully occupies a kind of space. In stories of peaceful moments the self appears to be *there* in this way. Take for example the story, *Good Morning Mr. Sun* (p. 77). The young boy's presence is felt as he experiences the glory of the sun:

> It was shining just for me . . . because of me.

How important he must have felt in that moment having been singled out in such a way by the sun itself! In a similar vein, the woman in the story *Egg-salad Sandwich* (p. 95) described her feelings about herself, during a moment of peace:

> It was a moment when I felt so good about myself . . . about everything.

In the story, *A Walk With Meesha* (p. 94), the woman regains a sense of her own worth in a moment of peace as she sees the love and devotion in the eyes of her pet:

> I was worthy for that moment.

Linked through love she knows of her own value and experiences a sense of love for herself. In moments of peace there is satisfaction with things just as they are. There is a satisfaction with the self, the person that exists in that moment. The following participants' comments further exemplify the experience of being at peace with one's self:

> I think only that I am the luckiest person in the whole world to be here . . . right now . . . alive . . . so very alive . . . resting in this perfect moment. This is what it's all about.

> I became aware that there was no place I would rather be than right now, right here . . . watching my daughter and being her mom.
>
> There is no one I would rather be than me.

The *accordant self* not only is in touch with his or her own true self but values that self. This is the person who says, "I'm worthy to be alive. I am the best that I can be. I feel good about myself.

(3) Feeling Complete and Whole:

Though we are always in a process of 'becoming', in a moment of peace it is as though we have arrived. We 'rest' in the higher level of our being, the perfected form for now without the push and chaos, or the dyssymmetry of dissonance. There is no distance from perfection which is how we tend to measure our uniqueness or define the quality of our existence. Jacob Bohme used the word 'qual' which means agony or anguish (cited in Gadamer, 1996) and interpreted quality as 'qual' because quality is what distinguishes one life from another. Quality of life, then, is about distance from the center of self or, as indicated above, from love. From this perspective, it is possible to conceive of distinguishing features as being founded on 'closeness' to perfection as in the case of a unified self which is experienced as momentarily perfect. From participants' stories and reflections, it is being suggested that the *accordant self* experiences peace in this way.

It is human to be forward moving and this movement or striving has much to do with a desire for completion; the gestalt of the human person, the finished product. Of course, we are never finished as long as we are alive because we are always changing and developing (Erikson 1959; Kohlberg, 1981; Mahoney, 1991; Piaget, 1979). Even with death, the degree to which it is perceived as finished, complete, over, the end, has to do with one's foundational belief system and the existential questions about life and being itself (Who am I? Why am I here? What is life? What is death?). The anxiety of becoming leaves us at a distance from ourselves but also, in our awareness of the distance, which is fundamental to our existence as thinking beings, we are brought to authenticity and closeness (Heidegger, 1962).

There are, as with all things, variations to a theme, differences in our 'heterogeneity' as James (1985) calls the inconsistencies within ourselves (p. 140). The gap between who we are and who we wish to become, the sense of incomplete*ness*, is greater for some than for others just as it may vary within an individual life. Moments of peace have been shown to contain an experience of being closely in touch with the true self and of feeling worthy. The *accordant self,* which is present in times of peace, is thus, both known and valued. In moments of peace the self is also experienced as being without 'gaps', as *completed;* a unified self. 'Love' acts as a catalyst for the experience. The following participant story exemplifies a sense of completeness during a moment of peace.

> It was Christmas day and I had taken a moment to walk in the winter air. An ever-so-kind breeze blew against my face and body as though gently caressing me. For me this was a kind touch from Jesus and in that moment I felt loved. I felt complete and whole. Deep in my soul the frenzy of the day subsided into a peaceful calm.

Feeling loved, the woman in the story has a sense of herself as whole and complete. In this perfect moment nothing is missing. The pieces all fall into place just as they should, leaving no gap, no emptiness. The feeling that "something is missing" in life is a common human experience. In fact this article of ancient knowledge is so fundamental that it has found its way into common language. For example, 'to be unwell' in its literal German translation means to be 'lacking' in something (Gadamer, 1996, p. 74). It is moments when we sense a lacking that we do not experience our self as *a well being*. From participant accounts, the experience that "something is missing" disappears in moments of peace. One woman's comments exemplify the experience of completion as she verbalizes a distinction between simple relaxation and true peace:

> I am staying in a beautiful lodge and I walk into the 'great room' where a fire is burning. The coffee is made and I take time to look through beautiful native art books. I have a relaxing coffee. This in itself should be peaceful and *yet I did not feel complete.* Something is not quite right.

She subsequently heads into the woods on her cross country skis and her experience deepens:

> . . . the snow is falling . . . gently, softly . . . and in the perfect stillness everything is just right. *That* to me is a peaceful moment.

When emptiness is experienced in life the tendency may be to gather and store things to fill the gaps, only to realize, like the cross-country skier before she ventures outdoors, that wasn't it! And the search begins again. I recently attended a Christmas play in which the human experience of incompleteness was articulated. "I just feel something is missing," the innkeeper in Bethlehem confided in Mary. Her reply was, "maybe peace is the missing piece." I thought about my own statement when I first chose the topic of this study, "All I want is some peace in my life." It would be wonderful if it were that simple and I could say, Ah . . . I have found the missing piece (peace) and so I'll just fill up the hole (whole)!

According to Gadamer (1996) the full completion and realization of a living being has found no counterpart to the Greek word, *entelecheia,* created by Aristotle. The word also means soul, the living character of the body, the form of fulfilled self-realization. As Gadamer indicates, Aristotle's word expresses, "a kind of presence in which our authentic existence, so to speak, realizes its telos, its perfected form" (p. 74). From participant accounts moments of peace are times when one may experience *entelecheia,* the soul of him or herself, the fulfilled self, the self that has, for now, 'become'. In this momentary reprieve from the process of becoming anxiety drifts off into *nothingness* which is far away from this place of fulfillment. As one participant commented:

> I have a deep sense that I am part of all the beauty that surrounds me. That I do have a place in the universe, a place that I do not have to fight for. No striving. Just acceptance. I am.

Just as it is human to have some distance from ourselves, to err, so is it human to be waging battles with our own desires, especially if they are not aligned with our true identity. The other lower self emerges on a regular basis and we may be divided or even in battle. 'Malevolent forces' may divide us and put us in battle against our self. In Judaeo-Christian tradition these may be identified as desires of the flesh (James, 1985). In Taoism, Lao Tzu taught that desires are fostered by human society such as money, power, importance (Welch, 1957). The Dalai Lama (1994) teaches that ignorance is the greatest barrier to peace because it results in delusions which lead to suffering. What is real? What is illusion? What is my heart's desire?

Reason and passion may be at odds as Gibran so eloquently describes in his classic book, *The Prophet.*

> *Your soul is oftentimes a battlefield upon which your reason and your judgement wage war against your passion and your appetite.*
> (Gibran, 1974, p. 45)

The conflict between "two wills," as James (1985) indicates, can readily create a divided, conflicted self which he sees as existing between the carnal self and the spiritual self. In his studies of religious experience, he speaks of unification in the process of conversion. He emphasizes that some have inner constitutions that are more harmonious and well balanced than others and are prey to only "amiable weakness" while others might experience, "a series of zig-zags." He continues, "Their spirit wars with their flesh, they wish for incompatibles, wayward impulses interrupt their most deliberate plans, and their lives are one long drama of repentance and of effort to repair misdemeanors and mistakes" (pp. 139-145). He refers to this as the "heterogeneous" personality.

In my study of personal peace one participant commented about the great struggle that can be experienced in coming to peace.

> Not everyone smiles through life . . . or even wants to live for that matter. To live each moment is a courageous act for some. It hurts to live sometimes and more for some than for others. My friend wakes up each day fighting off his own aggressive nature, trying to be calm and not angry. Sometimes it's like that . . . like an internal struggle against our own destructive side . . . like the shadow. Some are free of that. A lot aren't.

Though we may be more or less free of internal battles and discord, depending on our histories of experience or our unique 'nature', we all have experienced discord, dissonance, vital tensions and anxiety born of our own capacity to make choices. Sometimes, as was exemplified in the theme, Rhythm of Accord, the healing pulse of peace frees us from discord. Once again we experience 'entelecheia', the fulfilled self, the harmonious self, unified in our own strength and our weakness.

Symbols of Peace and the Connection to Self

Earlier in this document (chapter three) I referred to a research exercise which was used with groups for the purpose of depth communication, the symbols of peace exercise. A great many objects offered by participants as symbolic of personal peace were connected to the theme, Kinship in Peace, in general and to the sub-theme, At Peace with Myself, in particular. Several examples of symbols of peace and related participant comments follow.

Photograph of daughter playing soccer

> I feel at peace watching my kids being successful. I've been successful because they're successful . . . I feel that I've been a good parent.

Mechanics magazines

> (As a mechanic) I get them all . . . shelves and shelves of them! I get into them easily because I know what it's all about. I can put my ear to the hood (of a car) and hear what's going on.

Electric guitar

> This is my pride and joy. It gives me a soothing relaxing feeling.

Carvings of guitars

> I make them look just like the real thing, made to scale, they have the strings and all (looks to group for approval).

Photograph of girlfriend

> Life isn't easy with a music man. She (girlfriend) tolerates me. I could never please him (father). She doesn't put me down. She encourages me.

Handmade (hooked) rug

> This is the biggest one (most significant symbol she brought to group). This represents my creativity . . . rug hooking. Creativity! That's a big thing of peace for me.

As one focus group participant stated, with reference to a peaceful moment:

> Well you just feel that you're successful within yourself. It's kind of like a moment of self-gratification.

Contained within the peaceful experience is a sense of being connected to the self. This is a special link in that it is a connection to the deep thing within that says, "I am worthy of being alive." This is unlike a connection which binds us to our inadequacies or to the whims of those who judge us adequate or unworthy. Rather it is a relationship with authenticity and is founded on the belief that humankind is essentially good. At peace, when I look to my own core the light shines on the goodness that is me. The connection flows with love.

Summary of At Peace with Myself

The overriding theme, Kinship in Peace, is about a particular kind of connection that we have to ourselves, to others who live and have lived and to our God, Higher Power or Spirit. This is a connection constituted of love. With the understanding that the three relational realms are in themselves related and thus merge and unite eventually, an effort has been made to separate them for the purpose of articulation.

Kinship in Peace, as it relates to the most personal of the three realms, At Peace with Myself, describes the *accordant self* that is *there* during moments of peace. Presence is felt in a special way. The *accordant self* has been discussed under three sub-headings: In Touch with My True Self, Feeling Worthy, and Feeling Complete and Whole. The *accordant self* is a unified self. In a moment of peace and perhaps, for some, in a more lasting way, authentic presence encounters the world as one who has made peace with him or herself. The peaceful person is then able to reach, in peace, to other. This brings the discussion to the second, more interpersonal realm of the theme, Kinship in Peace, At Peace With Others, which follows.

(2) At Peace with Others

> *Your friend is your needs answered . . . your field which you sow with love and reap with thanksgiving . . . your board and your fireside. For you come to him with your hunger, and you seek him for peace.*
>
> (Gibran, 1974, p. 52)

This sub-theme focuses on the relational aspect of Kinship in Peace that explores our connectedness to other. Participant stories of peace suggest that we do not feel all alone, isolated or estranged during moments of peace. On the contrary, it is a commonly reported experience to feel "a part of it all." It is this sense of belonging and kinship that allows us to be alone with ourselves in a way that is not frightening. There has been a certain shyness about saying to one another, "I need you," as though this was a sign of weakness. Much talk of the self in psychology has lead to, what I sometimes refer to as, "the do your own thing demise." Finding oneself has, for some, taken on the skewed meaning of a narcissistic journey, as though one isolated soul is searching for him/herself, intentionally forgetful of other.

In the quotation above, Gibran indicates that we seek friendship for peace and suggests that peace lies in the acceptance and recognition of our mutual needs. With this acceptance it is possible to act in a loving way towards others and to lean sometimes, without the guilt of being a *dependent* and somehow lesser person for it. It takes courage to declare a need for other because in doing so we face our humanness complete with its imperfections. Tillich (1952) reminds us that the self is only self because it has a world, a structured universe, to which it belongs and from which it is separated at the same time . . . the courage to be is essentially always the courage to be as a part and the courage to be as oneself, in interdependence" (pp. 87-88). In a moment of peace the self is understood to be of value in an experience of intimate belonging to the greater whole.

In peace we are connected to the very core of what it means to be a human person and in this way we can be forgetful of ourselves rather than forgetful of other. This allows for the intimate joining which is characteristic of the kinship in peace. The bond to other can be so strong in peace that it is felt as almost "a fusion" as in the woman's story below:

> Awakening to the sounds and feel of early morning . . . eyes still closed . . . aware only of the warmth of sunshine and the sounds of birds . . . happy carefree. Problems of the day before, the day to come, up and filtering my thoughts. My eyes open. I see only the deep brown of my grandson's eyes staring into mine. Smiling, happy, innocent . . . so completely filled with love. For a moment I am lost in an overwhelming sense of contentment for what else could there possibly be in life beyond this moment, this experience, this fusion of hearts.

As though of one heart, the union is complete in the woman's moment of peace. The kinship that is felt with others has been a recurring theme in peaceful moment stories as in the story, *Egg-salad Sandwich* (p. 95) whereby the woman feels "so much in love" with her husband.

We may experience intense peace*lessness* when we feel estranged from a loved one and find peace rekindled when we make peace with someone who matters. The point of re-connection can be very significant as in one woman's story as she describes a peaceful moment which arose in feeling re-connected to her partner:

> This moment occurred at a time when my children were very young and I was occupied in domestic duties and caregiving. It seemed that distance had been growing between my husband and myself. One

> Sunday afternoon we were in the front yard enjoying the first warmth we had experienced that spring and we sat down together on a large rock. We talked about nothing in particular but a serene closeness abounded between us. Everything seemed possible again.

Peace is experienced as a "serene closeness" and as a re-opening of possibility much like hope. When at peace, we are open and ready to receive. In the story above, the distance experienced, prior to the moment of peace, vanished and in its place "a sense of peace within lasted throughout the afternoon and into the evening." The woman in the story later acknowledged, "peaceful moments are not very often a part of my life." For many, peace is a transient experience, visiting now and again, bringing with it "the first warmth" that might have been felt for a while.

Kinship is about family and, at peace, the experience is that we belong to *family*. Family can be taken to mean the entire universe and all its *members*. This broader sense of family usually begins in a much smaller but very important way, with one's own immediate relations. Family can be the source of great peace or peace*lessness*. With love amongst family members the scale tips on the side of peace. During an interview, one participant identified having a loving connection to other as significant to her being at peace.

> Whenever I have an argument with someone, especially my family, I have made it my practice to say "I'm sorry" before I go to sleep that night. Last week I didn't do this. It took me over a week to forgive my brother, to make my peace with him over a disagreement. It wasn't until I phoned him and tried to make amends that I felt peaceful again. It was bothering me all that time.

Another woman placed a strong emphasis on the family connection in her peaceful moment story. She confided that her relationship with her mother had been a troubled one, "it had always been rocky." As a result, she felt alone and lonely much of the time. Although her mother was not with her on the occasion of her peaceful moment, connecting to other family members brought her closer to her mother and to a sense of being at peace.

> I travelled alone this Christmas to be with my aunt and her family. My mother was unable to be with me. After a long bus ride, I arrived at the ranch to see magnificent mountains right in the back yard, a stream of water tumbling down and Christmas lights twinkling on the trees. Inside, my aunt, her husband and my cousins greeted me. For the first time in my life I felt completely at peace with myself. I was part of a family . . . I knew in my heart that my relationship with my mother was going to improve and it did. My cousin and I still phone one another and my mother and I remain close though she lives many miles away. I have my own family now . . . my husband . . . our children . . . a grandchild . . . I am part of a family.

Young and old know of love's importance in peace. A nine-year-old child spoke about "a very peaceful moment" when her mother picked her up from summer camp. Wrapped in love, a child knows of peace.

> Everyone was hugging me . . . my mom, the counsellor, even my brother. My mom was telling me what we were going to do my first day home. I felt wrapped in love and it felt good to be home.

Examples of loving connections in peace are abundant and can be easily recognized in many of the peaceful stories told throughout this dissertation. In an I - thou relationship, as is spoken of by Buber (1958) there is no 'object' of affection. There is only 'subject' to 'subject' as when one connects heart to heart. This respectful connection to other can be extensive and taken to mean a love for animals, trees and other things of nature as well as other persons.

For example, the man who is wandering through a little wilderness near his home (as described earlier) refers to the trees with respect seeing the patina as though it were the fingerprints of each tree. As a further illustration, the woman in the story, *A Walk With Meesha* (p. 94), finds her own worth in the love of her pet. As in the quote by C. Day Lewis, which says that we wound ourselves when we shoot a bird, in peace we honor our universal membership. Feeling an affinity to the family of life, we are at home in the world.

The expression of 'making oneself at home in the world' was a favorite one of Hegel's according to Gadamer (1996) who indicates, that by this is meant, "the desire to be at home with oneself, secure from any threat of danger, surrounded by a familiar understood and understandable world where one can feel free from anxiety." When at peace have we come "home"? Home has also been described as that special place where we can feel a secure inner sanctity; a place protected and where we can be by ourselves (Bollnow, 1961; Heidegger, 1977). In common language it is a place we can hang our hat, put our feet up; let loose, feel comfortable, be ourselves. In the peaceful moment story, *At the Kitchen Sink* (p. 89), a woman's peace as home is exemplified. As she sees the happiness of her child, the woman feels comfort and has a sense that "all is well" in her world.

In a moment of peace the atmosphere is one of reciprocal caring. There are no conditions placed on belonging. Just acceptance. In that moment the feeling is one of having arrived. Home as we know it has a roof, doors and windows and is set on a firm foundation. This is a place that houses our parents; the seeds of our creation rest within. We are sheltered from harm here, if our house is truly our home. Home is where the heart is. According to Bollnow (1961) the romantics have seen the task of man as "finding the way home." He adds, "this task is founded deep in the essence of being" (p. 32).

Finding the way home, reaching a point of promise that speaks of peace, may involve journeys that are fraught with disruption. Yet when we come to a place of peace we feel the rootedness that speaks of an origin beyond the womb of our mother. We are held in the womb of the universe, soothed by a gentle breeze or as one young man commented of his experience while fly fishing:

> As I touch the river and it holds me in its arms, there is peace.

The kinship in peace speaks of love and belonging; safety and security. Without walls that protect, there is protection. Unlike in times of war where thick walls fortify small spaces and keep out the enemy, during peace time the walls come down as it is safe to venture forth. No longer held hostage, the prisoner knows the meaning of freedom at the struggles' end. Safety! And the homeland is home once again. Is the experience of a peaceful moment like coming home as when we re-enter the homeland after being away? One man's peaceful moment story is about coming home:

> It had been two years since I left Montana, the land that held me as I grew up. Montana, my home. The engine of the Nissan purrs, almost silent in its flight. It devours the road bringing me back to the place I know so well, back to the place that I love. Tears well as we pass from the foreign country to my homeland. It is all so peaceful. The land embraces me. Extends me a welcome. "You are home," it says. "You are loved."

Being part of the family of life and knowing we belong are essential to the experience of peace. Membership extends to those who have gone before us. As one woman indicated of her deceased father, "the man has been dead 20 years and the love is still strong." There is peace in knowing our loved ones are safe even in death as in the story *The Cross* (p. 87). We may say "rest in peace" to those who have gone before us and our peace is in believing that they do.

An ancestral link as relevant to peace is exemplified in an old man's story. He spoke of a special project that he was undertaking which he called his 'peace project'. This consisted of gathering information on his relatives, going back as far as was possible, which took him to his homeland of Russia on more than one occasion specifically for this purpose. He said that, for years, he has been researching and collecting photographs. He indicated, "It is my dream before I die that this project will be complete." He explained how peaceful he felt as he recorded, pasted and otherwise engaged in his peace project. For this man, completion of the project meant making his sense of kinship explicit; concretizing the links to family in book form.

I have often wondered what it is about the musty smell of old books, the creaky floor boards of my aunt's old house, the mystique of an old painting or the visits to the farm that warmed my soul in a delicious kind of contentment. It was a sad day for me when they tore down the old store on Pigeon lake, ripping up the oiled and stained hardwood, destroying the canisters that, for decades, held the candies that delighted the now old folks of the small hamlet. It was called Bain's in the really old days, Barber's when I was a child, then Harry's and finally Riley's. Though it changed its name it stayed the same. I refused, for months, to enter the spirit-less modern facility which replaced the small wondrous store but have since relented as time separates me from the tragic little event.

Through this study I have come to better understand my attachment to things of old. A poetic reading that spoke of communal joining with ancestral spirits offered some insight. I love to be swept away, as in a dream, for just a moment, to a place where I feel the unshakable link to all that has gone before me. Fastened firmly in historic roots, I feel a kinship with the things of my childhood and my parent's childhood and the lives of others who walked here before us. From this I sense that there is an order to my existence. I came from somewhere and I belong to an ancestral stream; a human chain forms and holds me fast to my roots. This is a good feeling. Peace seems to be steeped in history.

This study reveals that the roots of peace run deep and they speak about where we come from; where we have been and they desire to leave something of our lives for those who follow. Past, present and future all become as one in this amazing experience which reveals to us who we really are.

Symbols of Peace and Connection to Others

As with the sub-theme, At Peace with Myself, objects of peace which were identified by participants are relevant to findings in that a large number of personal peace objects were related to the sub-theme, At Peace With Others. Included amongst the images and symbols of peace were frequently recurring photographs of family members and other significant individuals, gift items and other indicators that loving relationships are safe and well. The following symbols represent experiences of belonging and connection.

Photographs of loved ones

Perhaps the most common 'peace object' gathered by participants was a photograph of loved ones. Participants shared photographs of their children, partners, extended family members and pets. They made the following comments in relation to their symbols of peace.

Photo album

> These just symbolize the peace I get from my children.

Photograph of dogs

> These were a gift to me from my daughters. I find comfort in them (dogs). When I have a bad day they seem to know it and they come to me with that undying love.

Photograph of wife

This is a photograph of my wife. I keep it near me all the time. When I hear her voice after work everything is good again.

Photograph of extended family (including deceased parent)

We are at the lake, a place we all loved and we are all there together.

Photograph of researcher's family

These are my children. They are my peace and my peace*lessness*.. They gave me this picture of themselves as a gift one Christmas. They had it taken at Sears just for me.

Craft Item received as a gift

This is a gift from a friend. I like that she gave it to us (husband and self) . . . just gave it to us for no reason. It's peaceful to me that someone thought about us and cared about us.

Candles

I brought the candle because we use candles to celebrate special family occasions and because we light candles when we are having our friends over.

Sheet of musical notes

This is my old, old music that I played when I was at home and actually my mother played it as well. That's how old the music is. I wouldn't have brought in new music. It (old music) takes me back home.

Things that were my mother's

I didn't bring them (to group) but my mind has been going in the direction of saving things that were my mother's . . . where before I had no connection to these things. And in the last few years she's got

> Alzheimer's . . . we're aging. It's sort of the circle, I think . . . of life. And I'm attaching myself . . . feeling comfort, you know.

Country and Western C.D.

> This here is a C.D. that my daughter and I listen to when we are driving in the truck. We don't know the words but we hoop and holler together and just go with the music.

For participants in this study, objects that are links to loved ones in life and in death are symbols of personal peace. From the symbols of personal peace can be seen that validation of a loving connection to other is a significant element of the personal peace experience.

Summary of At Peace with Others

Kinship in Peace has been identified as a more invariant theme of peacefulness. It encompasses peace within the interpersonal realm which is experienced as a loving connection to others. When at peace the experience is one of being at home in the world. In this way peace is experienced as shared space and is a measure of closeness to others. The peaceful connection surpasses physical closeness and is one which both nurtures and is nurturing. At peace all hearts are as one or, as one participant commented, it is like a "fusion of hearts." At peace we are never really alone. We feel a connection to all that has gone before us and to all that will be.

Thich Nhat Hanh, who writes extensively about achieving peace in life, shares this sentiment:

> *If you suffer like a tree cut off from its roots, it is because you lost touch with your family and ancestral streams. Touching the Earth, you are able to reabsorb the vital source of energy bequeathed to you by your ancestors. In gratitude I bow.*
>
> (Thich Nhat Hanh, 1997, p. 147)

(3) The Spiritual Connection

The Acknowledgement

> I sat up against a big tree and looked around at the land which had been declared a sacred Indian site. Each time my eyes fell upon a little clump of grass that grew nearby the grass would gently wave to me. I'm not sure how long I sat there, receiving waves and nods from the grass, but to me it was a miracle. It was like nature was letting me know that I belonged, that I was a part of it all.
>
> (focus group participant)

The spiritual connection which is encompassed in the theme, Kinship in Peace, is the relational realm of experience which deals with the connection between ourselves and a higher power, God, Spirit. This aspect of personal peace moves us beyond our own personhood and the person of mortal other to the realm of the unseen, the unknown, the spiritual. I use several words as I attempt to name the 'other' with whom this connection is experienced because it is not my intent to impose one belief system or another on the readers of this research text. The domain currently being explored necessarily involves language that may seem foreign or even impositional, depending on one's own belief system. Nonetheless the findings of this study suggest that the spiritual component is significant to meanings of peacefulness. Thus the following text represents a way of speaking about the phenomenon that is best suited to experiences of it. The language used, though not the norm in human science research, remains close to personal experiences as lived by those who participated in this research project.

As in the two prior relational realms (self and other) what is significant and distinguishes the Kinship in Peace theme from other aspects of personal peace is that it pertains specifically to the nature of the affilial connection. The significant feature is the love and belonging that flows through the link one has with the self, with mortal other or with spiritual other.

The word 'spiritual' itself covers a vast area of meaning, some of which encompasses earlier discussions pertaining to kinship, as in the connection to one's own spirit when at peace with oneself and in the noting of connections to God and nature in earlier stories. Nonetheless the significance of the spiritual link in peace warrants further exploration. Within the context of this study it refers to several of the meanings indicated in the Webster's College Dictionary (1991). The selected meanings of 'spirit' are as follows: the animating principal of life especially humans; vital essence; incorporeal part of humans as opposed to matter, supernatural; the soul or heart as the seat of feelings; vigorous sense of membership in a group (p. 1291).

Within three sentences that comprise the story, *The Acknowledgement* (indicated above), it is possible to see all the dictionary meanings of 'spirit' exemplified. As the woman sits on sacred ground she experiences a profound connection to the spirit in nature who consents to her very existence in a personification of grasses that wave to her. Her membership to all that is the earth is solidified in what she later referred to as her "sacred moment of peace." Just like one participant who recognized each tree as though a person (discussed earlier in this chapter), she too attends to her surroundings with a near reverence. The spiritual connection in peace is further exemplified in the following man's story:

> Peace is there for me when I am in ceremony and it lingers for a time after, hanging in the tent like the smells of tobacco and sweetgrass from smudging. I am alone in the silence but I feel the Great Spirit's presence all around me . . . encircling me . . . washing right through me like sweet smoke. I hear things outside the tent. The wind is blowing in the trees and there is a bird singing. There is a drum beating somewhere far off, but in the tent it is quiet. I am very still inside.

Through sacred connection, the man in the story experiences a deep sense of peace as he is encircled by the Great Spirit. He is quiet inside as the peace of the Spirit "washes right through" him. The mortal soul is thus touched by the 'immortal' in a moment of peace. This is similar to the experience of the woman in the story *Whirlwind* (p. 91). While on a wintry trail she encounters 'spirit' in the form of a whirlwind of snow "which circled right through me." She feels as though she "had been touched by all the beauty and goodness in the natural world." In the encounter she is at peace.

For many, the connection is through nature to God, "the Creator's majestic expression of himself." For others it involves a more direct knowing as for the woman in the story, *The Cross* (p. 87), who felt she was given a sign that her grandmother was in heaven. This sense of direct experiencing of God's love was also noted in the story, *The Journal* (p. 109) whereby the storyteller received an unexpected directive. Sometimes when we are troubled we may seek peace in places that feel closer to God as for the following participant:

> It was a time in my life when I had many worries and was feeling overwhelmed. There is a small chapel near my home that is open to anyone who wants to spend time with Our Lord. I recall that on this occasion I was there all alone, praying. Very suddenly a feeling of total peace washed over me and I knew that I was in the presence of my savior and friend. Nothing else mattered.

The woman in the chapel experiences her relationship with God as one of deep "friendship" and in her affiliation with her "savior" she feels a "total peace." The chapel, as the formal house of God, brings her closer but as one woman commented in the story, *Sweet Surrender* (p. 121), her "very own back yard" became a cathedral as she surrendered her worries to God in a moment of peace. Many stories of peace identify the presence of God's love as the most significant factor determining peace. "God *is* peace" was the comment made by one participant. Another stated:

> Peace comes from trusting in a larger entity . . . one infinitely more knowledgeable than ourselves. I have to really take time to center on peace. If I can just leave my worries behind and find a moment . . . then I can find a oneness with God.

There is peace in a sense of oneness with God or, as another man indicated in his moment of peace, "the infinite met the finite . . . God embraced me that day." In the embrace he adds, "I knew of my significance." With this statement we return to the beginning and know that the kinship which is experienced in peace is a love for self, for others, for nature, for God and encompasses a profound sense of belonging. At once we are humbled yet know of our significance in the world for, though we are but a dot of color on a masterpiece, we are essential to the beauty of this most magnificent work of art.

Symbols of Peace and the Spiritual Connection

As in the two other relational realms of the theme, Kinship in Peace, participants identified objects of peace that pertained to the relational realm of sub-theme, The Spiritual Connection This collection of objects and images resonate with the mysteries of existence. Amongst these objects of peace are religious items, symbols of nature and images that, broadly speaking, offer a place in a larger unseen whole. Following are participant comments as these relate to their symbols of peace.

Horseshoe-nail cross

> I'm not a religious person but it kind of means something . . . its kind of a good luck charm . . . hanging on the wall. . . to keep out the

vampires or something (looking at it, unsure of why he regards it as symbol of peace) and . . . I was thinking about the sweetgrass that an Indian once gave me.

Tarot cards

They are like a religious experience . . . sort of like a prayer. I turn to them when things aren't going right . . . when I get really desperate in my life and need to find peace I always go to my Tarot Cards and find answers there. I use them when I'm seeking hope and comfort.

Turquoise stone

This just sits on a dish on my mantle beside a jade stone. It's the color of the earth, the sky, the water.

Candle

The candle is a very religious symbol and it is a symbol of my peace with God. We use candles for all our religious celebrations. In our church (Catholic) the sacrament of reconciliation (which asks for and grants forgiveness for wrongdoing) is called the sacrament of peace. I know that it restores *my* peace.

Crucifix

This is a symbol of Christ and I brought it because my relationship with God is important to my peace. I can feel this way in nature too, when I behold God's creation. Have you ever felt closer to God on a mountain top?

Buddhist prayer wheel

I've been trekking in Nepal twice and this (showing her peace object) is a Buddhist prayer wheel. Some of the villages you go through, have huge prayer wheels and you just walk by and turn them with your hand. As you go by, you make a wish and that sends your prayer up to the gods.

Glass Canister with designs of clouds and flowers.

It's like looking outside and looking at nature; a little picture of nature right there inside my house. (Nature is) almost like a connection to the outer world. It's beyond people. The earth itself . . . it's spiritual . . . heavenly . . . like the sun, moon and stars . . . a heavenly connection to the outer world. Some days when I am stressed I'll just look up to the sky and breathe in the cool air, listen to the birds or the quiet. It's a spiritual thing. It affects my spirit and calms me down . . . (tells me) that things are Okay.

Objects that link to a life greater or beyond the self were identified as. symbols of peace for many participants. Spiritual symbols of peace are symbols of transcendence and connect us to our *immortal self.* From the symbols of peace indicated above can be seen that the spiritual connection is a significant element of the personal peace experience.

Summary of The Spiritual Connection

The third relational realm of the theme, Kinship in Peace, is The Spiritual Connection which refers to being at peace with a power beyond ourselves. This is a transcendent realm of experience encompassing a sense of eternal love and belongingness. Through a spiritual connection we are linked to the deepest roots of our existence as we embrace that which seems beyond the earthly realm.

Reflecting on the Three Relational Realms of Peace

The theme, Kinship in Peace, has been discussed under the three main headings: At Peace with Myself, At Peace with Others and The Spiritual Connection. For the purpose of articulation, the three relational realms have been separated from one another. This has been done with the understanding that they are interconnected in the reality of lived experience. Peacefulness is a personal experience. Through the form of person the experience is understood. Thus all three realms are really 'personal' and relate to the *accordant self,* which is the self at peace.

Self and the Personal Realm of Peace:

The first realm discussed was referred to as the personal realm because it is about the specific relationship one has with the self. The *mortal self,* or finite aspect of the *accordant self* is relevant in that the personal realm of peace has to do with how we value ourselves as finite beings. It is a moment of being the best human person that we can be. In authenticity, the self is free to go beyond the ego and transcend fear. The experience is one of existential peace as opposed to existential angst. For a moment, the experience is that the human self is 'finished' in life as though the final stroke of a paint brush has been placed on the canvas. Striving ceases.

Peace in the personal realm is peace as a human experience with knowledge of mortality. It remains a human experience so much as it is a connection to our humanness. It is different from supernatural experience in its earthly connection. At peace "the feet are still on the ground." The peace experience remains personal or returns to personal as we still look back upon ourselves. If the human connection or kinship is severed and a flight of fancy occurs, the experience would most likely be called by a different name. In psychology we might say that people who lose touch with reality are mentally ill. In contrast to this, the peace experience is closely in touch with the reality of human existence.

Self and the Interpersonal Realm of Peace:

The Interpersonal realm involves being at peace with others. The *accordant self* is free to move beyond itself and its ego and join with others in a compassionate and loving way. Being at peace encompasses being other-conscious rather than self-conscious. In the kinship of peace we perceive ourselves to be more the same than different from others and for this reason we do not feel like strangers to our earthly family. Mortal self connects to mortal other and in unity with an ancestral stream, mortal self and immortal other join hands. At peace, in the interpersonal realm, the self might say, I belong to this world and I know I am loved. With this realization comes the love of self and we are thus linked to the personal realm.

Self and the Transpersonal Realm of Peace:

More than in the other two realms of the peace experience the immortal self is present in the transpersonal realm, The Spiritual Connection. The Spiritual Connection of Peace moves us beyond the ego and surpasses the mortal link. This experience is extra-sensory in that it is the realm of the soul or spirit. Though this link keeps us feeling safe on earth, it also moves us toward a sense of eternal safety and love. The kinship transcends or moves beyond the earthly realm to the cosmos, to the ground of our creation, to the spirit, to God. The link, as in the other two realms, is affilial not as in a chain of bitterness and discontent but as links of love and belonging. An affinity to all that lays beyond the natural senses is experienced and because we are not strangers in our spiritual membership we do not need to ask as many questions about who we are or why we are here. Do we ask if we can enter our own home?

This relational aspect of peace is concerned with transcendence but does not lose its metaphysical quality. We still look back upon. We remain connected in mind, body and spirit for the experience to be named personal peace. This is not about the soul's flight outside of the body. This is about the human link to the spiritual and in a return to the personal realm of peace it is about the human link to one's own spirit. The *accordant self* is thus unified.

Summary of Kinship in Peace

The Kinship in Peace has been identified as an invariant theme of the personal peace experience. As with other dimensions of peace that are being identified, the word invariant is used to distinguish the theme as being less variant than other aspects of peacefulness rather than being used in a definitive manner.

It is within the nature of personal peace to be relational in that it encompasses a reaching out to touch something or someone. Peace rests *with*, and in doing so it becomes what it is. Within the framework of the experience are affilial linkages. These are connections of love and kinship. The findings of this study suggest that when at peace we feel connected not estranged. We experience an affinity to the world and beyond, which gives us a sense of being at home in the world. Thus we may be alone or in the physical presence of others when at peace because, either way, we feel as though we are an integral part of the universal membership. The deep links to a history past and yet to come are experienced in a secure sense that we belong to it all, that we have a rightful place. The sense of connection may be very powerful and be experienced as a melting away of boundaries. 'I' is free to see beyond itself and is a 'presence' that is simply *there*. This is not the same as making oneself the center of focus yet self rests at a center as though at the core of being. Love flows through the connections with self, with other and with the 'spirit'. At peace it is all as one.

(VI) WINDOW TO ETERNITY

It seem'd as if the hour were one
Sent from beyond the skies
Which scatter'd from above the sun
A light of paradise!

Shelley (cited in Press, 1994, p. 271)

The theme, Window to Eternity, is here presented as the most transcendent dimension of the peace experience. The word transcend means to rise above or go beyond ordinary limits; beyond direct apprehension; not realizable in human terms (Webster's College Dictionary, 1991, p. 1416). This characteristic of the sixth dimension of peacefulness makes articulation of it particularly difficult. Similar to the section entitled, The Spiritual Connection, (Kinship in Peace), the use of language that is atypical of human science research endeavors becomes necessary in describing this aspect of personal experiences of peacefulness. The language that has been used remains close to personal experience accounts of participants and is inclusive from the perspective of a holistic apprehension of the phenomenon of peace. This section which discusses a transcendent aspect of experience necessarily involves meanings that are steeped in personal beliefs. There is no intent to impose belief systems on the reader but rather to convey certain meanings that have emerged in studying the phenomenon.

The Window to Eternity theme represents the point at which all that has previously been written in this document begins to merge. It borrows, from the theme, Accordant Rhythm, the *peak* of the motion, the high point of the rhythm. It borrows, from the theme, Promise in Peace, a sense of being eternally safe. It is relevant to the themes of Inner Rejuvenation and Sweet Surrender in Peace because a Window to Eternity shows us the source of energy and healing and also the surrendering ground where we lay our burden down. The 'Spiritual Connection' realm of the 'Kinship In Peace' theme is closely related to the 'Window To Eternity' theme and also speaks of a connection to soul, spirit and the 'beyond.' 'Spiritual Connection' tells us about the experience of the heart. 'Window to Eternity' is more about the place where head and heart meet, at least in so much as it speaks of truth from the vantage point of clarified vision.

Window to Eternity hints of prior themes. However it is deserving of its own presence in the articulation of the peace experience. It can be distinguished in three main ways: firstly, by the 'perfection' of the moment, secondly, by its escape from temporality or, more accurately, its capturing of the eternal moment, and thirdly, in its relationship to truth and meaning. In keeping with these aspects of the theme, Window to Eternity, the following text is organized around the sub-headings, Entering the Promised Land, the Eternal Moment and Window to Truth and Meaning. The section concludes with a Summary of Window to Eternity.

Entering the Promised Land

How does one describe heaven? Participants have spoken of peaceful moments in many different ways but what is characteristic of the experience is that it is a desired state which encompasses a sense that all is perfect as it is in the moment. Life is experienced "as it should be." The completeness of the moment has resulted in participant attempts to describe the experience of peace using such words as *magic, heaven, eternity, divine, infinity, forever* and *perfection,* to name a few. Words do not come easily when describing a glorious experience. There is something in the moment that shows us a perfect world just as it is, that allows us to reach beyond ourselves, beyond life and death and enter *the promised land.*

For a moment we know perfection. Some individuals are awestruck or become speechless in the presence of peace as they feel that they are experiencing more than life itself. At peace it may seem that we are peeking through a window to eternal life as in the case of the fisherman in the following story:

> Peace drifts in at dusk. I'm out on the lake fishing, and the trees, my God . . . the trees . . . and the rocks and the water . . . They are so perfect! I will never be able to describe their beauty. Though they are of this world they speak, whisper, hint of another. It's perfect. Its peaceful . . . all painted by a soft setting sun and the call of a loon.

In peace there is a hint, a glimmer of what is to come, as for a child, past bedtime, who sneaks to the top of the stair and peeks at the grownup festivities beyond. A Window to Eternity is experienced by the teenage girl in the following peaceful moment story entitled *The Ladder,* who climbs up to the barnloft of her childhood:

The Ladder

> I remember the ancient and splintery ladder that led, for me and Daneen, to our childhood. Up to the barnloft, up to a place where *we became ageless and timeless.* I remember lying on my little yellow bed and Daneen on her pale blue bed. I had on my blue kangaroo top and so did Daneen and our engineers hats hung above our heads on a small rack. I can hear our old record player spinning out 'Walking in the Sand' and 'Bo Diddley'. It was as if *time stood still for us.* The late afternoon sun shone through the cracks and knot holes of the weathered roof dappling our loft *like magic,* and to us it was.
>
> Lying there, it was *like heaven,* like nothing mattered but now. I can still hear uncle Harry in the distance tinkering with one machine or another and the much welcomed steps of aunty Rose Marie, bringing cookies and tea. I know that I can never go to that space again, to the time of dress up, but I hold garden fresh peas firmly to my memory of

> those years, those moments during which I time I would say to myself, I am perfectly happy, right now.

Perfection has been a consistent theme in participant stories. In a way it is an ideal moment and the ideal is part of the real, not separate from it, though it may be experienced as almost too good to be true. In the barnloft the storyteller describes the experience as "like magic . . . like heaven." This is similar to the comment of the cross-country skier in the story, *Whirlwind* (p. 91), who indicates:

> Magic surrounds me.

As though momentarily resting in the center of a magic circle, the woman is somehow set apart from what could be construed as the real world when her friends meet up with her on the trail once again. In the circle all is perfect.

The sense of having been "somewhere else" is exemplified in another participant's comment. After leaving a peaceful wilderness path near his city home he states:

> I felt that I was back in the world around me.

Though he has a sense of 'otherworldness' to the experience, where is it that he has been if not in this world?

In another participant story, *Parry Sound*, peace is like a very perfect gift that is given to the storyteller in a place of "magic."

> Peace is a lake near Parry Sound. It's where we went every summer when I was growing up, for two weeks of *magic*. Up there peace can come upon me so quickly. I'll be standing at the end of the wooden dock. It's afternoon, the sun is hot, the and water is only a dive away, always inviting. Always there. Just to dive in and submerge myself,

> and be one with the water, then I re-emerge. And I'm standing there and the boat is pulling away. I hear its increasing pitch, and then, the smell of oil and gas. The fishermen are off; a smile and a wave and they become smaller and smaller, with the wake of the boat following them. I am smiling, the sky is so blue and the sun soaks me to my bones. I stretch and breath deeply.
>
> Suddenly I know that I am at peace . . . this is not something I am seeking, it is simply a gift that is given to me, there at the end of the dock . . . for a moment I am knowing perfection.

In "knowing" perfection during moments of peace, comments such as "there is no where I would rather be" or "there is no one I would rather be than me" are characteristic, as has been indicated earlier in this study. It is not just adults who recognize perfection in a moment of peace. A ten year old girl described peace in a similar manner.

> One day when I was at Sylvan Lake, I was in the water with my cousin when it started to rain . . . so refreshing . . . peaceful. The (lake) water felt warmer than usual . . . The rain was falling on us . . . just the two of us . . . It was incredible. It was the perfect moment . . . the way everything was . . . perfect!

From participant accounts, peaceful moments hold a promise of something more, something lasting. They show us the way and give us a reason to go on. With momentary peace as a reality, experienced fully though in its transience, the notion of lasting peace or peace once again becomes a possibility. Peace is thus hope-filled and like hope it is forward moving. Yet this perfect moment moves us beyond hope and, as has been described in the theme, Promise in Peace, a promise of something touches the experience. There is a sense of freedom to face the world, to live in harmony with the pain as with the joy. As though soothed by lake waters or held by something greater than the self a sense of eternal safekeeping may characterize experiences of peacefulness as has been described earlier in this study. As for participants in this study, peaceful moments may encompass an experience of reaching beyond the self to the world of spirit; to a place that is perfect and whispers of eternity.

The Eternal Moment

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour
William Blake (in Erdman, 1982, p. 490)

This study suggests that a peaceful moment is an eternal moment or, as Blake indicates, it is as though we hold eternity in an hour. In the story, *Whirlwind (p. 91),* the woman comments, "Time seemed to stand still." Moments of peace enjoy a timelessness as though at peace we have crossed the threshold of time. Past, present and future merge as one. In the story, *The Ladder* (p. 169), the young girl climbs to a loft where she becomes "ageless and timeless." In a transcendent experience there is a sense of becoming eternal, of reaching out far beyond ourselves as was described in the theme, Kinship in Peace. In our reaching we may feel as though we have met the infinite or that we have touched the source of all goodness and truth, thus making a 'Spiritual Connection' as in the story *Whirlwind* (p. 91).

In moments of peace it is as though the gates of perception are clarified and we are allowed to see so far that for some it is like seeing "forever." Cocooned in an eternal moment it is as though, at peace, we have been "someplace else." The woman in the following story describes this experience:

Inuvik

> It was the dead of winter in Inuvik and so very dark when Michael and I set out for our late evening walk. The air was dry and so cold that it bit my face. I could feel my breath pile up on the fur of my parka. Increasingly it became wet and prickly, poking into my skin and sticking a little. And with each breath out, there was a quick burst of white and then it was gone. At some point, I slipped into my own world, swept away by the night air.
>
> With each step we took, the packed snow beneath my mukluks made a sound that belongs nowhere else in the world that I know; hollow, rhythmic, crisp and crunchy. It was as if we were walking upon an immense shell that surrounded nothing more than a hollow ball of Earth below. The sound of the night air was audible. I was hearing the entire sky for a thousand miles around. While I could still hear Michael's gentle voice, it was a hundred miles away, like part of the sky . . . so huge . . . so black. The stars were so many they were like one. I could see forever.
>
> It was as though this walk had no beginning and had no end. It was as though I had been making this journey all my life and yet as though I had never been there before. There was only the moment and it could have been forever. I don't know when I returned to Earth and picked up the threads of the conversation with Michael. And although returning to his company was wonderful and just what I wanted to do, it was different. It was some place else.

The woman experiences a 'Window to Eternity' on a dark cold night in Inuvik. A moment of peace takes her where she can hear and see "forever." She attends to the smallest details in her peaceful moment and, like William Blake's grain of sand, she finds eternity in the crunch of the snow, the white puff of her breath, the endless sky and the cold air. Blake would likely say she is a woman of 'vision'.

William Blake, whose poetic work is mystic in nature, awaits our return to what he refers to as 'vision'.

> *If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite .*
>
> William Blake (in Paananen, 1977, p. 58)

Blake continues his commentary, criticizing the plight of human kind:

> *For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.*

It is possible, according to Blake, to return to 'vision' through the imaginative creativity which comprises "poetic genius" and allows us to "see through the eye rather than with it"(p. 58).

Stories of peace reveal an opening of space as opposed to a closing as though in a 'cavern' as indicated by Blake. I am reminded of the story, *The Cross* (p. 87), whereby the woman literally experienced an opening in the clouds and received her heavenly message. Though not everyone is privy to a miracle, peaceful moments are like openings in the sky, providing just a glimpse of eternal life.

Window to Truth and Meaning

> *The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.*
>
> Matthew 6: 22

"To see the light", an expression used in everyday conversation, means to reach a deeper level of understanding; to become more present to truth and wisdom. We have moments of "light" in our life when we feel as though we are in direct contact with truth. Borysenko (1993), who writes about spiritual optimism, cites the following as times of possible clear vision: near death experiences, transcendent visions, lucid dreaming, meditation, flashes of intuition and holy moments or epiphanies. Peaceful moments are currently being identified as times when deeper understandings are often available.

In the clarity of peace, truths are revealed and sometimes, during peaceful moments, answers to difficult life problems become manifest. For example, one woman was struggling with her mother's serious illness and found a "peaceful place" to rest whereupon she found peace in a particular kind of knowledge.

> I found a big rock to sit on and I watched the sun going down. I thought about my mother and finally, *it came to me* . . . she is going to die . . . but instead of feeling the previous anger, I was overcome with peace and I was determined to make the best of our last times together.

Another woman, in a moment of peace found an answer pertaining to her absent mother, when at a Christmas gathering with other family members. She commented in relation to the experience,

> I was transformed within myself. I *knew* that my relationship with my mother was going to improve.

A further example is found in the story, *Man and Machine* (p. 107). The storyteller, who finds peace as he is driving through the desert, comments as he heads home:

> Heading back into winter. Mind focussed. Strategies for coming battles manifesting themselves.

Many participants described a sense of clarity in moments of peace as the answers to plaguing questions seemed to be made available. One woman's dilemma was related to personal meaning and purpose in life and, in a moment that she distinguishes as an experience of peacefulness, she "sees the light" in terms of what is important to her:

> This day, I felt that I was in an emotional no-man's land having no strong feelings about how I was living or how to live. Should I stay home? Should I return to nursing? I found myself settled into the bleachers of my daughter's volley ball game. My attention fell upon my daughter so much so that for a short time I don't think I was aware of anything else. I notice her confidence, her beautiful smile, her natural athletic moves, her pale skin . . . maybe too pale, her tiny frame and her occasional glance toward me for approval. Within this almost trance-like state I became aware that there was no place I would rather be than right now right here . . . watching my daughter and being her mom. My unsettled feelings about being at home seemed to dissolve. With the clarity and awareness of that moment came a wonderful feeling of just right, of perfect, of all is well, of peace.

In a subsequent interview with the storyteller she explained that, for her, peace has to do with self-knowledge. As in the above example of a peaceful moment, self-knowledge was significant to the experience of peace as she "became aware" that she was happy in her role as mother. The answer came to her in her moment of peace and an unsettled feeling dissolved in the "clarity and awareness" of the moment.

The results of this study suggest that moments of peace can be like windows to truth and meaning in that, for many, they are experienced as times of clarity whereby answers to life's questions may become available. There are many kinds of questions. Some have to do with the business of everyday life such as whether on not to go grocery shopping and, once there, what to buy. Though these everyday concerns may disrupt our peace of mind, they may be less significant than other kinds of questions that could shape our lives such as whether to pursue a career or whether to choose a particular person as a lifelong partner. The answers are of varying degrees of importance in terms of the impact the choice may have on a life. Some questions, as in the case of the woman above, are related to personal meaning and purpose. As Frankl (1978) reminds us, having a sense of meaning and purpose in life is basic to healthy functioning.

There are questions which derive their impetus from our existence itself and, though we wonder and ask and reach for answers, we are left where we began, asking and wondering about the mysteries of life and our part in it. Existentialism defines the questions of life, death, being, otherness, meaning and mystery, exploring the aspects of our being (Buber, 1958; Keirkegaard, 1983; May, 1983; Neitzsche, 1962; Sartre, 1956). Is a moment of peace like an existential moment where truths are revealed? Can peaceful experience bring us closer to the mysteries of our existence? How 'deep' is our vision in moments of peace?

Within peaceful moment stories are experiences of individuals who felt they had gained understanding of otherwise incomprehensible truths. For example, one man commented, in relation to his peaceful moment, that he felt "close to the Creator" and that he knew, in that moment, that he was loved. He stated:

> The realization was so clear and perfect, so true yet incomprehensible.

Other participant stories contained comments related to 'being' and one's place in the world. For example, the woman in the story, *The Acknowledgement*, who received "waves and nods from the grass," indicated that the experience was like nature giving her an important message:

> . . . that I belonged. I was part of it all.

With similar words, a man standing at the end of a dock, watching a fishing boat disappear, commented:

> I have a deep sense that I am part of it all. That I do have a place in the universe.

These comments resonate with the words of yet another participant:

> Now, when I look at the 26 of us (children and grandchildren), like in the photograph I have on my dresser, I know it was all meant to be.

A peaceful moment can be conceived of as an *existential moment* when there is an accompanying sense that the meaning of it all is there before us or perhaps, more accurately, that which is before us, whether large or small in scope, gives forth its meaning. Unlike other moments, what is revealed in a moment of peace is not open to misinterpretation. In phenomenology, Husserl (1970) thought it possible to attain purity of meaning, to 'bracket' or suspend presuppositions and recover an original meaning, in tact. In the interpretive philosophy of hermeneutic phenomenology, Heidegger (1962) and others (Gadamer, 1975, Hirsch, 1967, Ricoeur, 1981) are more skeptical arguing that there is no such thing as an uninterpreted moment. From this perspective, truth is ever changing. Yet, for some, peaceful moments seem to offer a more direct, unfiltered kind of truth.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) might suggest that what has been described of peace involves a putting aside of the natural attitude of "the better to understand them" and instead what is achieved is "a direct and primitive contact with the world" (p. 7). According to Merleau-Ponty, it is in this primary consciousness that essences are revealed. As though a clairvoyant, the peaceful person sees more than meets the eye. That which is personally meaningful is honored and with that honoring comes peace. And when at peace, with a clarity of vision, that which is meaningful comes to light. In this way peace and meaning share a reciprocal relationship. As Merleau-Ponty indicated, "In the silence of primary consciousness can be seen appearing not only what words mean but also what things mean" (p. 15).

In this study, participants have described peaceful moments as times of clear vision when, to borrow Blake's terminology, the "gates of perception" are cleansed (cited in Paananen, 1977). When at peace we are like visionaries, perceiving the world creatively. As Blake adds, "What is now proved was once only imagin'd" and "everything possible to be believ'd is an image of truth" (p. 58). We thus, as visionaries, become open to truths that might otherwise escape us. In a transcendent experience we are able to see beyond ourselves.

In moments of peace participants seemed to perceive the world 'creatively' much as a poet might do. As poet, C. Day Lewis (1961) comments of the poetic image, it conveys "something more than the accurate reflection of an external reality" (p. 35). Attached to the perception is a feeling, a poetic emotion or passion that arises out of the human mind. A sense of kinship, which has been identified in this study as a dimension of the meaning of peacefulness, is experienced through the creative perception of a poet, according to Lewis who states, "the poetic image is the human mind claiming kinship with everything that lives or has lived" (p 35).

With the creativity of a poet, at peace we are open to 'truths' which are all around us. One might say, the peaceful feeling washes over the 'scene' cleansing and clarifying, revealing the presence of a world at peace.

Summary of Window to Eternity

'Window to Eternity' is the sixth and final invariant theme that is being presented as part of the experience of peacefulness. As with the other five themes, a certain commonality among participant stories has resulted in the inclusion of this sixth dimension in the description of the phenomenon. 'Window to Eternity' is a dimension of peace that is difficult to describe in that it seems to reach outside the normal bounds of lived experience. In a moment, it is as though there has been a glimpse into another world or perhaps a sense of the best this world has to offer. The experience can be so perfect that it doesn't seem 'real' and has been referred to by participants as magic, heaven, eternity, divine, forever and perfection.

The experience of timelessness that can occur in a peaceful moment contributes to a sense of having touched eternity. When at peace, one may step outside of time as it is normally known and experience an eternal moment that seems to have no beginning or end. When at peace there may be a sense of having direct contact with 'truth' whereby answers to life's problems become available. For some, meaning and purpose in life become defined as that which is personally meaningful in life presents itself. A peaceful moment can also be an existential moment and reveal something of the mysteries of existence. At peace it is as though we peer through a window to eternity as we reach beyond ourselves; beyond our life and our death in an experience of transcendence.

A DESCRIPTION OF PEACEFULNESS

As I have written about peace and attempted to distinguish some of its dimensions in order to articulate meaning, I have been encumbered by the task of separation. The task provides a product that is less than the experience of peace itself because a complete understanding, theoretically, would yield discernible pieces and a perfect fit amongst them. Through this human science research endeavor, a better understanding of peacefulness has emerged. However, as van Manen points out in speaking of lived experience, "it is always a human puzzle."

It is at this point, when all the small rivers run back into the sea, that it is likely advisable to step out of the flow and look back upon the 'form' of peace, which has emerged from lived experience accounts of peacefulness. In doing so, it would seem that the contents of the peace experience touch one another and together form a soft, gentle, fluid shape of peace.

Images of peace vary and may present in the cry of a loon, in the eyes of a baby, in an egg-salad sandwich, in a chapel, in the waves of the ocean, in the form of a child skating on a back-yard rink, in the scene of a farm-yard at dusk, up in a barn loft or in the embrace of a loved one. The possibilities are endless as are the opportunities for peaceful experience. This is a hope-filled observation. It is within the nature of peace itself to present in such a plentiful and varied 'dress'. Yet certain more invariant meanings of peace have recurred in personal experience accounts of the phenomenon which, metaphorically speaking, could be conceived of as a 'spirit' of peace that allows us to identify it as peacefulness rather than as something else. How do we recognize peacefulness?

The phenomenon of peacefulness is being presented under six thematic headings which emerged from participant accounts of the personal peace experience; Rhythm of Accord, Promise in Peace, Inner Rejuvenation, Sweet Surrender in Peace, Kinship in Peace, and Window to Eternity. Each represents one aspect of meaning contributing to a multifaceted, multidimensional collective signification of the phenomenon of peacefulness. No claim is being made that these six dimensions are the only contributing aspects of meaning that are significant to the phenomenon, but rather that they represent an incomplete, tentative constellation identified by this researcher from the findings of this research study at this point in time.

It is a humbling experience to attempt a description of personal peace; to put words to that which defies articulation. With a complex phenomenon such as peace, it is not possible (perhaps not even advisable) to grasp meaning in a single definition. Thus each of six dimensions or themes of peacefulness have been explored and described. They represent more invariant aspects of the phenomenon than other aspects which may be more variant. The description which follows is derived directly from six themes which emerged in studying personal accounts of peacefulness. It is essentially a condensed version of each of the contributing arms that embrace the whole of peacefulness.

Peacefulness can be recognized by a Rhythm of Accord which flows in harmony with the pulse of life itself. Unlike the flatline of death, the spirit of peace has a vertical, fluctuating kind of motion. A sense of unity characterizes the experience as dichotomies seemingly melt into one as though there is a perfect fit. The rhythm of peace flows through the circle of life, through beginnings and endings, thus it carries a kind of knowledge about life. The motion of peace seems to be a healing one, reconciling pain and fear and allowing for a full and complete experience of life.

Contained within the rhythm of accord is a powerful Promise in Peace that is similar to the experience that occurs when we hear the words, "It will be Okay" or "It is Okay." The promise in peace can be distinguished from other kinds of promises in that it has an unshakable quality, it is fully believed and it can result in a transcendent experience of spiritual well-being that reaches beyond physical concerns. As such, peacefulness can be conceived of as a very powerful reassurance and be experienced as, "It will be Okay no matter what."

Peace can also be understood as an Inner Rejuvenation. At peace there is a sense of being in direct contact with beauty and goodness which is a rejuvenating kind of experience. The personal peace experience encompasses a pocket of life-giving energy and strength. Moving beyond rest, though restful, it initiates a springing back into being; a sense of being fully alive in a renascent experience. Though aesthetic in its sensual qualities and 'feeling' tone, the peace experience is practical, having ontological relevance. From within the peace experience can be heard the life-giving words, "I can go on." There is power in peace.

A Sweet Surrender in Peace encompasses the experience of being carried by something greater than oneself. This involves both a surrender of power, as burdens are handed over, and an empowerment, as there exists a freedom from the chains that bind. In peace, the surrender is sweet because it is an agreeable, pleasant relinquishing of a need to act on one's own behalf. Peace is found where wisdom tempers human agency. The experience encompasses 'letting go' which may be recognized as a feeling of weightlessness.

Peace can be identified by its affilial nature. At peace one might say, "I am more the same than I am different." Kinship in Peace is experienced as a loving connection and a sense of being at home in the world. Within the very framework of personal peace experiences are affilial linkages in three relational realms of personal (at peace with myself), interpersonal (at peace with others) and transpersonal (spiritual connection). At peace the *accordant self* is experienced in three main ways: as being in touch with the true self as good and forward moving, in a feeling of worthiness, and as an experience of wholeness or unity. The *accordant self* is free to connect with 'other' in a joining that is characterized by a strong sense of love and belonging.

Finally, the experience of personal peace has been conceived of as a Window to Eternity. Like an 'opening' in space it is as though a 'glimpse' of something greater than ourselves is being offered. This experience may seem unreal and be the most difficult to articulate of the dimensions of peacefulness. In the opening, life is seen as perfect, almost too perfect to be true. There is a timelessness that adds an eternal quality to the experience and there may be a sense of seeing 'forever'. Looking beyond the self, clarity of vision marks this transcendent experience. In a moment, it is as though truths are revealed and meaning and purpose are understood.

What is the Meaning of Peacefulness?

As six facets of peace draw closer to a central whole, one 'ribbon of meaning' winds its way through the constellation. As reported by participants in this study, peacefulness is experienced as being connected to some larger 'spirit', of being part of an overriding purpose or a larger whole. This overriding theme embraces unity in a rhythm of accord, a promise of 'safe-keeping', an inner rejuvenation of mind, body and spirit, a surrendering to something greater than one's self, a sense of kinship that encompasses a spiritual connection and a window or opening that allows a glimpse of what lies beyond the limits of our humanity.

CHAPTER FIVE

ENHANCING THEMATIC DESCRIPTION

Six themes of personal peace have been identified and described through lived experiences of the phenomenon (chapter four). There are many vantage points from which to view a phenomenon which allows for ongoing exploration and enhancement of description. Three such viewpoints are presented for the purpose of enhancing understanding: (1) The Sensual Dimension of Peace, (2) The Illusive Dimension of Peace, and (3) The Practical Dimension of Peace. These dimensions represent a more variant aspect of meaning than the six preceding more invariant themes. By variant is meant tending to change; not universally accepted; differing from something of the same kind (Webster's College Dictionary, 1991, p. 1475).

From the perspective of personal peace, the descriptor, variant, is used to emphasize those features of meaning that seem to be more changeable than others and are more readily shared with other lived experiences. For example, I could say that peace is illusive and for some individuals it likely seems that way. But illusive is an adjective that could apply to a dream, a vision, a sound, hope, joy, a trick, a scene, or any number of phenomenon which impress as 'unreal' in some way. In this regard, though the descriptor may be applicable to peacefulness, it also belongs to many other experiences that one would not call peacefulness.

Though the three themes which follow are less invariant than other dimensions of peacefulness they, nonetheless, seem to belong to the discourse of peace. As such they are presented for enhancement of meaning.

(1) THE SENSUAL DIMENSION OF PEACE

A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees.

William Blake (in Paananen, 1977)

Personal peace is experienced through the human form. What do we see, hear and smell when at peace? How do we *feel* emotionally and physically? What does the body know of peace? Because of the rich 'sensual' details and the depth of feeling present in peaceful moment stories, the significance of the sensual dimension of peace is being explored at this time. This section is presented under the following headings: Through the Senses, A Peaceful Feeling and Embodied Peace.

Through the Senses

Though we speak of peace as inner or personal, it isn't simply with the inner eye that peace is envisioned. When at peace, I do not retreat to my inner world as though to escape the life around me seeing nothing with the outer eye. Peace is practical in that it attends to the world outside as well as inside; yet it is aesthetic in its concern for emotion and sensation as opposed to intellectualism. The stories, as representative of experience, do not leave us indifferent. These are emotional images. The sentiment seems to flow from heart to heart. At peace we are awake to the world.

What does the world look like through peaceful eyes? Is it how I see or what I see that distinguishes peaceful experience? Peaceful moment accounts abound with rich sensory details; sight, sound, smell and touch are finely tuned, ready to receive the external signals with a pure quality. Take for example one woman's peaceful moment story:

The Harvest

> It is dusk on a chilly fall evening. It is my favorite time of year. Donned in a heavy sweater, I can see and feel the dew settling over the field. Leaning over the fence, I watch as two bright lights creep toward me. As the combine approaches, I see the silhouettes of two . . . maybe one person in the cab (that would be my son and my husband). The harvest moon beams as the smells of autumn impregnate the air; dust, dew,

> fresh straw. The long-awaited harvest is coming to a close as the combine comes into the yard to unload the last hopper of grain. Tonight, there is a very peaceful feeling over the farm.

With great detail of recall a woman envisions the circumstances of a peaceful moment. Fully alive she experiences the sights, smells and the *feel* of the moment as she is drawn into a peaceful state. Personal peace is felt as almost an entity apart from herself as it hovers over the farm and enters her being as *a peaceful feeling*. Through her eyes the world takes on a peaceful glow.

A fourteen year old girl recounts a peaceful experience as a moment of "watching":

> Sometimes in the summer when our family is staying at the lake I get up around 7:30 AM before anyone is around. I creep downstairs, make myself a cup of cocoa and go sit on the dock. The morning breeze flows through my hair as I sip the steaming drink. I look out into the clear, calm water and I see a mother loon and her chick gliding along. I *listen carefully* as they sing to each other. There are no thoughts, really. I'm just there feeling happy. I am just watching.

Perhaps in her peaceful moment, the girl is watching in a special way. She becomes open to the sounds of nature and almost privy to the special message (a song) which she hears as part of the peaceful image. A boyhood experience of peace also exemplifies richness of sensual detail as the warmth of the moment is easily felt by the reader in the following lines taken from a participant's peaceful moment story:

> A bud began to open to reveal to me its golden beauty . . . I felt the golden rays (of the sun) throughout my whole body and the warmth of the wall against my back.

The gentle *touch* of peace is evident in the following few lines taken from the story, *Floating in Space* (p. 92):

> I noticed the silence under water . . . water sloshing on the surface . . . a peaceful sound, fluid and soft. The waves were large and smooth, gently rocking me up and down.

Even with eyes closed and body floating under the surface of the water, the sounds of silence are heard and the smoothness of the water is felt by the young man who is floating in the ocean. The words that are contained in peaceful moment stories are gentle words; fluid and soft like the experience of peace itself.

These and the many other stories related in this chapter exemplify the sensual aspect of peace. Fully alive, the peaceful person is 'in tune' with the surroundings; a full participant in life.

A Peaceful Feeling

It is not without feeling that a person at peace engages in the world. The woman in the story, *The Harvest* (p. 186), shared her moment within a group context and she was observed pausing several times in the telling to gain her composure and allow deep emotion to settle. The following description of the group experience was based on my field notes which were written following the focus group experience:

> The room felt electrical like the crackling of power lines in the silence of the night. It was an audible silence. I was overcome with emotion as I watched them, so intently focussed on their writing as though no one else was there. Yet they sat close, gathered around the oak table in Cec's country kitchen. Perhaps it was the fact that I could see the wheat fields just beyond the kitchen window or maybe it was the stream of

> sunshine that penetrated the stillness, or the flowers Cec had placed at the center of the work area. It surely was all part of the unforgettable ambiance. Yet I think most of all it was the way they looked when they were writing, and there were those tears streaming down Andrea's face (field notes, Sept. 97).

According to Holmes (1949) deeply felt emotions accompany the beautiful, the good and the true. The emotional aspect of the peace experience is further exemplified in the following participants' comments:

> It's perfect. It's peaceful. And I wept in its perfection.
>
> Now the rink is occupied and I feel a flooding of emotion as I see him so full of life . . . back and forth . . . back and forth.
>
> It was a powerful experience. I was in tears. It was a miracle.
>
> I feel intense emotion when I think of them (peaceful moments). The tears flow and I get choked up.

The experience of peace can result in a sense of being "awe struck" or be experienced as so powerful that, as one participant commented, "I had to stop and take a breath." The peaceful feeling may be accompanied by tears or by a gentle smile that simply appears in the comfort of the moment. The peaceful feeling may drift in or sweep over a person calming and soothing. Not always dramatic in its appearance, peace wears many faces yet the peaceful feeling is distinct and during a moment of peace it is as though all other feelings have become subordinate. A gentle feeling overpowers others.

I think, at this moment, of a man that I know who disarms people with his kindness. I've watched him subdue potentially aggressive situations with gentleness and respect. This is like the peaceful feeling that washes over contrary thoughts and feelings subduing them in the process. As one participant commented in the story *The Chapel* (p. 104) "like a sweep of calm, one very strong thought just wiped out any other thoughts that I was having." Her thought was, "It will be Okay," which has been discussed as an important component of the theme, Promise in Peace, described in chapter four of this research text.

How does one describe the peaceful feeling, the "sweep of calm," indicated above? It is just that, *a peaceful feeling,* that contains a rhythm as opposed to a flatline, that is hopeful and filled with promise, that is empowering and strengthens, that is like freedom in a lightening of burden, that encompasses love both given and accepted, and that is somewhat 'awesome' in its momentary touching of perfection and eternity. It can arise in a moment of pleasure or pain. It can be bitter sweet. Peace 'feels' for life in its affinity and compassion.

> *I would not exchange the laughter of my heart for the fortunes of the multitudes; nor would I be content with converting my tears, invited by my agonized self, into calm. It is my fervent hope that my whole life on this earth will ever be tears and laughter.*
>
> Kahlil Gibran (in Sherfan, 1975, p. 283)

Embodied Peace

Is peace bodily felt? In the harmonious rhythm of peace does it escape body consciousness altogether or does the body respond to its existence in a noticeable way? We experience the things of the world through our bodies and it is through our embodied nature that the rhythms of life are revealed such as sleeping, walking, illness and recovery. Peace, as lived, is experienced within and through the human form thus it is worthy to note how the body experiences the phenomenon.

We have all experienced something of oppression in difficult times, of being dragged down in a sense of heaviness or of being hemmed in or low. Our body often responds to times like this with fatigue and the experience might be that the body is lacking its 'soul' or 'spirit', as though lifeless with no will to go on. Movements are an effort during times like these and we have to push our unwilling body to continue. Or perhaps, if fear dominates the experience, we might notice that our heart is pounding in our chest, that our body is vibrating and tense, ready for defensive action. Moments of peace are different from this. How *is* peace experienced in the body?

Throughout this chapter, in descriptions of peaceful moments, bodily sensations have been identified by participants revealing that peace is experienced in a tangible, bodily felt manner. Peace has been experienced as a feeling that was very different from what went before. Take for example the following words in one man's peaceful moment story:

> A new feeling began to creep through my heart and soul.
> I remember the way it moved through my chest and arms.

The sense of "something powerful sweeping through my body" has been reported by other participants in a moment of peace. Often accompanying the sensation is an increased awareness of things occupying the immediate space such as a gentle wind, the blueness of the sky, the smell of new mown hay, the motions of a loved one. A heightened sensate awareness has been exemplified in the detailed accountings of sight, sound, smell and touch in peaceful moment stories. As though moving from scenes of inner preoccupation, such as one experiences in times of distress, there is an outwardness which accompanies peacefulness. The body reaches outward to touch, smell, see and hear. As though with arms open, the body is prepared to receive the world.

The movement from inner to outer in peace is as though, " a weight has been lifted from my shoulders" as one woman commented during a cessation of worry and an accompanying peaceful feeling. A sense of weightlessness and a lightness of the body has been repeatedly reported in peaceful moments and is exemplified by the use of such words as floating, drifting, weightless. Take for example, the words from the following young man's story *Floating in Space* (p. 92):

> I was weightless and with my eyes closed, floating in space.

The comments of a woman who experiences a reprieve from pain in a moment of peace, further exemplifies the experience of lightness or unburdening:

> For a moment my heart lifted.

So light as to be weightless, a sense of freedom accompanies the experience. The body is unconstrained and the motion is fluid. Like a sigh, an outward breath relieves the body of its rigidity and tightness. The body experiences fulfillment as peace flows through, soothing, healing and bringing "a warm feeling" as described in the story, *The Music Man* (p. 90). A sense of fulfillment in peace was clearly articulated by one participant who commented, "I am full . . . I am full of love."

In a moment the experience may be one of transcending the bodily form and merging, as though void of boundaries, with all that comprises the universe. A sense of perfect harmony melts away the walls of difference. One woman described the experience as "a fusion of hearts." Others have clearly described an experience of being outside of bodily constraints as in the following examples:

> I am almost outside of myself in freedom.

> My surroundings have taken me out of myself and made me one with them.

> The dock and the lake and the sky are all part of it. Or is it that I am part of them? I don't know.

The transcendent nature of the experience can be almost tangible. Individuals have reported feeling *touched* by the hand of God, acknowledged by nature as grasses *wave* in acceptance, being *caressed* or *soothed* by nature or reassured by God through a directive or a sign. The sense of *being held in the arms* of the universe or of *being carried* were also described. Though the poetic nature of the experience is exemplified in metaphoric language which abounds in writings of peaceful moments, in many of the stories there is an element of bodily felt, tangible engagement with an otherwise unseen world.

At peace we are free to see and to be beyond ourselves. A formless body takes shape in a sense of worthiness and belonging. The body is extended in an opening of space and as Blake might say, at peace the peaceful is no longer closed up "till he sees all things thro' the narrow chinks of his cavern" (in Paananen, 1977, p. 54). A sense of "forever" and "eternity" may accompany a peaceful moment, as has been described in chapter four ('Window to Eternity' theme), and the body may move from a sense of mortality to immortality in this transcendent experience.

Subtle energies flow through the body at peace. The rejuvenating powers of peace have been discussed in chapter four (Inner Rejuvenation theme). Peace has a very practical side in that it empowers the body to move on in an experience of being "energized". Life's subtle energy has been referred to as 'Qi' (pronounced chee) in China, 'Ki' in Japan and 'Kundaline' in India. Eastern medicine works closely with energy flowing in the body through such practices as acupuncture or Qi Gong. These interventions release trapped energy in order to open the flow and release the blockages which can manifest in physical sickness (Aung, 1996). In Western medical practices the inclination is to speak less of subtle energies and more of the effect of the mind and emotions on the physical state of the body.

Much research has been conducted in the area of mind-body healing which has identified the strong link between emotional and physical well-being. Stressful states have been shown to exacerbate, if not cause, many physical ailments such as heart disease, eating disorders, headaches, stomach aches, back problems, and immunodeficient disorders from the common cold to cancer (for overview see A. Sheikh, 1984; A. Sheikh and K. Sheikh, 1996). Techniques such as meditation, hypnosis, imagery, relaxation and Qi Gong, which can act as stepping stones to peaceful states, are being promoted worldwide to facilitate physical health (Aung, 1996; Benson, 1975; Erickson, 1986; Hay, 1984; Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Rossi, 1991, 1996; Rossman, 1987; Siegel, 1989). A state of peace could be said to promote health of body because a 'body' at peace is a body that is in harmony or *running smoothly.*

With the recognition that the body experiences voluntary action and that involuntary function is not *lived* in the same sense of experience, it is important to consider the effect one has on the other. When I am tense my blood pressure may rise, my muscles may become contracted, my breathing rate may change, my palms may become damp and so on. The fight or flight response (Benson, 1975) is much different from the relaxation response which is characterized by a gentler body rhythm, most likely compatible with the response of a peaceful body. What is the natural state of the body? Is it one of agitation or peaceful easy flow?

The basic rest and activity cycles of the body have been known to science for a long time but researchers such as Rossi (1991, 1996) have introduced new perspectives on bodily rhythms which emphasize the human capacity to detect and voluntarily work with bodily changes. Recent work has expanded the understanding of bodily 'peaks and troughs' or ultradian rhythms which are heeded by our whole being, according to Rossi, every 90 to 120 minutes, over a dozen times a day, everyday of our lives. Relevant to a discussion of peace, Rossi describes the rest periods as times when "our systems of mind and body attempt to turn inward for a period of heightened healing and recharging for renewed endeavor" (p. ix). This resonates with my description of peaceful states as having an inner rejuvenating power. Rossi refers to these times of rest as the body's 'Ultradian Healing Response' which lasts 20 minutes at a time. During a lecture in Edmonton in 1997 entitled, *Symptom Path To Enlightenment,* Rossi referred to the 'trough' or rejuvenating times as "the great peace" which is regularly upon us. He described the subdued rhythm as "a warm wonderful feeling" or a "beta-endorphin feeling."

It may be that our natural bodily functions implore us to attend to the rhythm of peace. It would seem possible to discern peaceful experience because it has been described by participants, retrospectively, as being a bodily felt one. From this discussion it could be said that not only is peace all around us and spiritually within us but it is also physically within the very pulse of the body; within the breath that gives us life. A warm and wonderful feeling, peace moves in a graceful bodily rhythm and reaches outward to dance in the light of the soul.

(2) THE ILLUSIVE DIMENSION OF PEACE

Somebody said mirage, and it was gone,
but there I've been living ever since.
Blackmur (in Williams, 1952)

There are aspects to the peace experience which give it an illusive quality. For example, in the theme, Window to Eternity, it has been shown that the perfection in a moment of peace can be almost "heavenly." In contrast to other less desirable experiences, the moment can seem as an inaccurate reflection of the 'real' world; the feet on the ground world we know so well. The seeming disappearance of self or 'I' during moments of peace has been discussed in the theme, Kinship in Peace, and this also can contribute to a sense of peace as illusion. In addition the discussion of health as enigma, referred to earlier, provides a foundation for understanding how the harmony of peace almost conceals itself in its lack of disturbance

(Gadamer, 1996). Peace comes upon us much more subtly than does peace*lessness*, though its presence has life-giving significance. These factors play heavily on the illusion of peace as illusion. Two other characteristics of peace play a role in how it is perceived. These are firstly the transient nature of peace and secondly, the experience of time during interludes of peace. The Illusive Dimension of Peace is being explored under the following headings: Transient by Nature, Peace and Temporality, Does Peace Really Exist?

Transient by Nature

It seems that it is the very nature of peace to be a transient guest drifting in and out, touching us with its rejuvenating powers only to slip away once again replaced by something else. This is not to refute that some hold peace much closer than others or carry it with them over time so as to be considered a person "at peace." And perhaps it is something one has more or less of, or one can experience at different levels as though it has a higher or lower power. There is abundance of variety in this many splendored phenomenon which seems to appear of its own volition at times and at other times be something that we, perhaps, can earn. On one hand we recognize peace when it is there. On the other, we can't seem to hold onto it for very long. Participants often spoke of the terminal nature of the peace experience, expressing a desire for its return. The impermanence of peace leaves us reaching out . . . somewhere . . . out there . . . almost within reach. Is it really there?

The transience of the peace experience is exemplified in Shelley's poem, *Recollection.* A moment of peace is described by the poet that is not unlike those submitted by participants. Shelley recalls, with great detail, the moment and laments its loss. The poem begins as he calls the cherished experience forward.

Rise, Memory, and write its praise!

Up, to the wonted work!
Come, trace the epitaph of glory fled.

A glorious moment which has "fled" is recalled. This is similar to what occurred for participants in this study as I asked them to write their stories. Shelley continues:

We wander'd to the Pine Forest
That skirts the Ocean's foam;
The lightest wind was in its nest
The tempest in its home.

He describes the stillness and the soft motion of peace:

How calm it was! - the silence there
The inviolable quietness;
The breath of peace we drew
With its soft motion made not less
The calm that round us grew.

Out of the calmness of his surroundings peace enters. There is nothing that could violate his peace because he is safe within a magic circle. Inside the circle the mortal and immortal meet. This is reminiscent of the theme, Window to Eternity, and to participant comments of peace as a place where finite meets infinite:

There seemed . . .
A magic circle traced, _
A spirit interfused around,
A thrilling silent life;
To momentary peace it bound
Our mortal nature's strife; -

He feels that he is the center of the circle and he experiences love. This is similar to participant accounts of feeling worthy and being filled with love in moments of peace:

And still I felt the centre of
The magic circle there
Was one fair form that fill'd with love
The lifeless atmosphere.

Reflected in the pools that lie under the forest boughs he sees a reflection:

All was interfused beneath with an Elysian glow,
. . . A softer day below

But the experience, as though in a dream or in a magic circle, or as an illusion, dissipates. It does not last:

. . . an envious wind crept by,
Like an unwelcome thought
Which from the mind's too faithful eye
Blots one dear image out.

The moment is gone as could be counted on by the all "too faithful" mind's eye and he laments a lack of peace in his life:

Though thou art ever fair and kind,
The forests ever green,
Less oft is peace in Shelley's mind
Than calm in waters seen!
Shelley (cited in Press, 1994 , p. 270 - 272)

It is apparent that peace, for some, is a very illusive thing in its appearance and disappearance. It may seem so unreal that it has been referred to as "magic". On the other hand, like Shelley, participants in this study retrieved recollections of peaceful moments which were saved as though in a time capsule. The contents may have become sweeter with time but they were submitted as genuine recountings of a well remembered experience. This stands in testimony to peace as a phenomenon *of substance* and perhaps also to its own character of finiteness.

Peace and Temporality

The experience of time during moments of peace is relevant to the sense of *unrealness* which may occur during a moment of peace because it is through the dimension of time that we link our life story (Ricoeur, 1983); that we measure our existence as having a past, a present and a future. It provides a framework to say, "I am. I am here." Temporality, as the subjective experience of time is called in phenomenological human science terms, is part of the grounding level of the lifeworld (van Manen, 1990). Grounded in time I feel a substance to it all. I wake up; I go to bed; I sleep. I move through time as I live each day. In a way it is as though I measure my existence using points in time as units. Certainly this is one way to put substance to existence.

Moments of peace enjoy a timelessness as previously discussed in this study (Window to Eternity) and, as was exemplified in stories such as *The Ladder* (p. 169), which finds a young woman in a sanctuary of peace where she became "ageless and timeless." She indicates of her peaceful place, "It was as if time stood still for us; nothing mattered but now." For this young woman, time becomes the moment. It is undivided, not like time on the hands of the clock. Van den Berg (1972) has referred to literal time as an inequality of dimension. Yet once in a barn loft a young woman experiences past and future merging into present. A unity, equality, suspends all motion. There is no awareness of duration and no need to be aware. As if rocking in an easy chair the moment comes to rest in the center of the rhythm. Centered in perfect balance, between the back and the forth, the moment is caught in time.

The experience in the barn loft is similar to the sense of timelessness experienced by the young man as he encounters the vastness of the ocean (chapter four). He comments of his peaceful moment:

> I was caught in trance, fixed at a certain place and time in the universe.

Similarly, the woman in the story, *Whirlwind* (p. 91), experiences that "time stood still" and the man in the story, *Floating in Space* (p. 92), suggests that "time became inapplicable."

Sometimes when we become very absorbed in a project or activity we may experience a similar sense that time has been lost. We look up very surprised to see that the hands of the clock have moved through several units into hours. This is not always a peaceful absorption as when one feels driven to complete a project or is anxious about the quality of their work. In a moment of peace there is ease to the motion rather than agitation. Time has no driving power for it exists only as now. One man enjoys a moment of peace as he is engaged in building an addition to a friend's lake cottage, hammering materials on the roof:

> As the saw is buzzing cutting the boards I am hammering and with every blow of the hammer I am making a game out of it. I am trying to see if I can put a nail in a board with one blow, just playing. We laugh, we have beer breaks, we pound away, and when my wife said, "supper," I couldn't believe it! I looked at my watch and I had been up there for 12 hours.

Though pounding away on a roof may not be everyone's idea of a peaceful afternoon, this individual distinguished the above experience as a peaceful moment and presented the story in a group setting for use in the current study on peace. His emphasis, as he recounted his moment of peace, was on the temporal aspect and the notion that time simply disappeared. Of interest is that, as in other accounts, the details of the moment are recalled in heightened fashion. For example, in his verbal account he spoke of seeing a birdhouse on a tree, of watching his wife drive up in the driveway and of hearing a humorous conversation between his friends. Perhaps what has disappeared is the kind of time that pushes and shoves and what remains in peace is a benevolent time having an easy motion, that speaks of completeness and arrival. No need to march through time any longer. For the moment, the feeling is almost *eternal*.

One woman commented of her peaceful moment during a walk on a winter night (see *Inuvik*, p. 173):

> There was no destination to reach, nowhere I had to be, no time I had to be home . . . it could have been forever. It is as though I am outside of myself. I know I am walking but I don't know how it is that I moved my feet. They had a life of their own.

Though walking she has no awareness of her body. Without consciousness of body there is no awareness of its motion. Motion has been related to time in that every motion contains time (Van den Berg, 1972). For the woman enjoying a moment of peace, the notion of time is swept away with the cold night air.

Does Peace *Really* Exist?

In its perfection, peaceful experience may seem too good to be true as has been discussed in chapter four under the theme, Window to Eternity. In its impermanence and its resistance to temporal quantification the phenomenon of being at peace could seem separate and apart from real life. Take for example the following discussion amongst focus group participants:

Pat: *Sometimes when I've been in that peaceful state I've almost felt that everything is too good . . . something is going to happen.*

Jay: *Ya . . . Poignant reality!*

Pat: *Yes. Something steps in . . . the world infiltrating you and you want something from it or it wants something from you . . . And you start running again.*

Real life steps in and disrupts a '*too good to be true*' life experience. In this way it has been called heavenly or magical. Like a trick it is really *nothing* at all. In a longing for the perfect moment, the utopian state, the mirage of peace, it becomes the bearer of its own terminal nature.

Is a state of peace nothing or is it everything? I return to a question that I asked a participant, "At peace are we empty or are we full"? She struggled with the question as she spoke about her practice of Qi Gong and high levels of peace achieved by concentrating on *nothing*. She jokingly stated, "Maybe you could say *nothing* brings peace," adding, "Perhaps that's why it is an experience of *weightlessness*. As indicated earlier in this study, a moment of peace was described as a moment of fulfillment, not an empty moment. One woman reflected on the love which "filled" her when at peace:

> Whether it is the love that is coming to me from God or the world or the love that is coming out of me, I don't know.

What appears illusory is a phenomenon of great substance. The perception of peace as illusion may, in itself, be the illusion. Rather than deceive, a state of peacefulness has been shown to reveal, rather than cloud, it has been seen to clarify. Rather than being empty, like a magic trick, it has been shown to contain important meaning. Yet as though a mirage, peace slips away, intruded upon by an unwanted thought or a cold wind or some human suffering. Perhaps *we* are the cold wind that ruffles the serenity in our expectation that life should remain ever peaceful. Perhaps it becomes illusion when the rhythm of accord, as a dimension of the peace experience, is not understood.

Is it that we delude ourselves with *unrealistic* expectation? Is lasting peace on earth the illusion? Yet it is with serenity that a life of moments can be apprehended. The accordant rhythm of peace and its unshakable promise may be graciously accepted by those who learn to live peaceful lives. Perhaps lasting peace is acceptance of its own terminal nature. When we expect to be happy all the time we are sure to be disappointed. The naiveté of such a view is the subject of William Wordsworth's poem, *Nature and the Poet.* (cited in Press, 1994, p. 276). Selected lines from the poem follow:

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
Such happiness, wherever it be known,
Is to be pitied, for tis surely blind.

A fool's oblivion is not peace and as discussed in the theme, Kinship in Peace, an intimate connection with the human race, or as Wordsworth calls it, "the Kind", is integral to the experience. Yet in our connection we suffer. If we experience compassion, if we engage in an empathic relationship with others, there is no insulation from feeling for our world and those in it. In *Nature and the Poet,* Wordsworth identifies how his perceptions of peace have changed over time. In the poem he is studying a painting of a castle that is braving a storm. He thinks how, earlier in his life, were he the artist, he would have painted the castle in a much rosier light as is described in the next two lines:

A picture of lasting ease
Elysian quiet without toil or strife.

The castle would be painted on tranquil land, free from troubles, ever happy:

Beside a sea that could not cease to smile

He reflects on his change of heart referring to the image as a fond illusion:

Such in the fond illusion of my heart,
Such picture would I at that time have made;
And seen the world of truth in every part,
A steadfast peace that might not be betray'd.

An unbetrayable peace, free of storm, is the illusion and, as is exemplified in the following few lines, he submits to his humanness not unlike the theme, Sweet Surrender in Peace, discussed earlier:

I have submitted to a new control:
A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
A deep distress hath humanized my soul.

A power is gone, likely the magic power of innocence, the insulation and invulnerability of youth. Life does not exist as a one sided coin. Peace resonates with the passionate rhythm of life:

O t'is a passionate work! - yet wise and well.

He reaches an accord in peace:

Not for a moment could I now behold
A smiling sea, and be what I have been:
The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old;
This, which I know, I speak with mind serene.

In continuing the poem, the stormy picture is seen in the new light of "patient cheer" and "fortitude" and with a heart that is no longer "housed in a dream" he embraces his humanness and finds peace.

How does peace become a tangible experience as opposed to an illusion? Upon what ground does it find its stronghold? Perhaps it is all in what we take peace to be. What do we think of as *a good life*? How strong are we in the face of the storm and how might we look at the castle in the painting? Is it wretched in its weathered garment or graceful in its fortitude? Which one is the illusion?

As always, how we perceive the world and what we mean by a good life are relevant to our grasping of what may seem to be, that some *thing* . . . that ever illusive peace.

That something still which prompts th'
eternal sigh,
For which we bear to live, or dare to
die;
Which still so near us, yet beyond us lies.

Alexander Pope (in Boynton, 1931, p. 150)

(3) THE PRACTICAL DIMENSION OF PEACE

The things you have learned and received
and heard and seen in me, practice these things;
and the God of peace shall be with you.

(Philippians 4: 9)

Throughout this research text peacefulness has been studied from the perspective of 'being' at peace. Participants in this study have also spoken about 'doing peace' in the sense that peace may be something that, to an extent, can be earned or simply present in 'doing'. In this way, there is a very practical side to peace which is being explored at this time.

The relevance of an experience which rejuvenates and gives strength to go on has been discussed earlier (chapter four). This is a very practical aspect of peace. Further to the theme, Inner Rejuvenation, peace is practical in that there may be ways to acquire it which are in themselves peaceful. Thus peace as pathway is being explored in so much as it relates to the nature of peace. The topic of The Practical Dimension of Peace is being explored under the following headings: Peace of Giving, Peace of Accomplishment and Peace as the Goal.

Peace of Giving

Participants in this study have described circumstances whereby peace is in 'doing' and have indicated specific actions that bring them peace. The act of giving has been identified by participants as being peace enhancing. The following participants' comments are related to the peace of giving:

> I feel at peace with my children because I've done what I should for them. I've done my duty and maybe more . . . giving . . . very easy to give . . . and in giving to my children I have earned peace.

> When my father died I felt absolutely no guilt because I was with him every day through his long battle with cancer. There was a peace in knowing that I had done everything that I could do for him and with that peace there was also the knowledge that you can't do everything. You can't control the world. You can't control very much in life. I have no control over the fact that I am going to die. I can be careful, and I am cautious in my life, but I don't know if I will live or die tomorrow. And there are a few things you *can* do for people.

One participant who does extensive community work posed the question of how it is that she is always wanting to help people. She queried, "Do I need to be needed to be at peace"? The themes of peace would suggest that giving of oneself in connection to others (see Kinship in Peace, chapter four) is significant to being at peace. The need to be needed contributes to peace and to self-worth. For example, in my own life, I have a desire to know that my existence is meaningful to another, that I have been of service in some way. Even children, the biggest takers of them all in their neediness, know something about the peace of giving. A nine year old boy talked about an experience that he said was peaceful to him.

Gloria: *Do you know what it means to feel peaceful inside?*

Joe: *Kind of.*

Gloria: *Can you tell me a time when you felt like that?*

Joe: *When I got my lizard and my turtle from the pet store.*

Gloria: *What was peaceful about that ?*

Joe: *I like making things for them. You have to feed them and set things up for them and not like with toys. In pet stores they are in such small cages and I put them in a big cage so they have more space. That's when I feel really peaceful.*

Gloria: *What do you mean?*

Joe: *I feel really happy inside. I spend lots and lots of time doing that, by myself.*

Much as this young participant did, my son at age 12 years identified times when he is 'taking care of' as peaceful times. He stated that he likes to put shavings in his hamsters' cage and enjoys "looking after things that need looking after." He commented, "That's peaceful to me . . . they sort of need me." Peace thus appears to be present in the process of doing as well as an outcome of doing.

Though a child's conceptualizations of what peace entails are very possibly different from those of an adult, as a parent living with children, there are times when I sense the peace within my children. The child's story above and my son's comments ring true as possible times of peace in a child's life. In the above two examples the children earn a little peace by taking care of their pets. This is not unlike the woman in the story, *A Walk With Meesha* (p. 94), who "feels worthy" as she walks her dog and feels:

> . . . appreciated so fully by a creature dependent upon me for her moments of joy.

Doing things for others seems to be a practical way of earning peace though it may not be the underlying motive in acts of kindness. As Mother Teresa has pointed out, works of love are works of peace (Vardey, 1995). In giving to others and acting as peacemakers in this way, it is possible that we may be earning peacefulness for ourselves.

Peace of Accomplishment

Simply doing something we like to do or that gives us a sense of accomplishment may be another way of becoming peaceful. One man describes the peace he experiences "in doing good work." As a mechanic he feels peaceful working with cars and in his capacity to put his ear to the lid and assess what is wrong. He told the story, presented earlier in this chapter, about his peaceful moment when building an addition to his friend's cabin whereby he lost track of time. For this man, activity can be both rewarding and peaceful. While engaged in the symbols of peace exercise (described earlier) this same man commented about another activity that brings him peace.

> I should have brought you a bottle of car wax (as a symbol of peace) to show you what brings me peace. Waxing my vehicle . . . now that's peaceful. I get a bottle of beer and just . . . waaxx . . . Reelaax . . . then see what I've accomplished. It's all polished, like a shining eagle, and then go for a cruise with the family.

For this participant, peace is both in the process (polishing) and in the outcome (pride in a shiny car and something special for the family). Similarly, a sense of accomplishment accompanied another participant's peaceful moment as she reflected on difficult changes that she had made in her life.

> I am sitting in the rocking chair in the family room, lights on low, the house is completely quiet as the girls are sleeping. I am listening to music and the song, *Her,* comes on. I begin listening to the words. I look around me to the home I have made for my daughters . . . I think about my work. I think also, "This is my life for the past year," and I see how far I have come. I feel good about what I have accomplished. I am now in a peaceful environment doing something that I enjoy for myself. I will let everything stay the way it is tonight. I can tackle tomorrow, tomorrow. I am going to remain here for a while.

The peace of accomplishment is further exemplified in objects that participants linked with personal peace, many of which were described in chapter four under the heading, At Peace With Myself. Samples of creative projects were amongst the symbols of peace presented during the group exercise. For example, wood carvings of guitars, musical instruments, handicrafts such as a home made rug and a book representing flower arranging were all brought to group by participants as signifying personal peace.

Participants articulated a link between creativity and a sense of peace as in the following comments:

> Creativity! That's a big thing of peace for me.
>
> I've been a non-creative person all my life. It (flower arranging) is a new part of me.

For many, a sense of accomplishment is related to the experience of peace. As in the examples above, this can range from having shown strength during difficult life changes to arranging beautiful flowers in the enhancement of less developed aspects of the self.

Peace as the Goal

There are many ways to 'earn' peace. It is reassuring to learn that there is a volitional component to the experience. With the recognition that there are certain actions that can be undertaken which enhance personal peace, the choice exists to 'set the scene' for peace or to be more receptive to the experience. There is no assurance that peace will be attained but, by being oriented toward personal peace, the likelihood of peaceful outcome is increased.

One group participant articulated the experience of being active in promoting peace in her life. She commented:

> In writing this story (*The Ski Trip*, p. 88) I realized something important . . . I have been creating peace for myself all along . . . just like in the peaceful moment.

She described how she intentionally engages in activities that are peaceful for herself and her family such as ski-trips to the mountains and outings to a lake cottage. She indicated that she tends to return to holiday places that were particularly peaceful hoping to repeat the experience. This is similar to the comments of another participant who recalled a moment of peace at which time she came to accept the pending death of her mother. She frequently returns to similar settings and attempts to recreate the moment of peaceful acceptance:

> She has been gone twenty years and I still mourn for her but *I try to feel* what existed then (in participant's moment of peace), every time that I go to the mountains.

She *tries* to feel the same feeling of peace that she had in years past and in doing so she is an active participant in the process of becoming peaceful.

Stories of peace are rich with descriptions of sanctuaries; special places where participants go to feel at peace. Take, for example, the comments of one participant who regularly walks on a wilderness path near his home.

> When I walk in, I immediately feel the peace of beauty around me . . . so close to the noise of the cars, I no longer hear the noise.

The man enters his sanctuary, as he has done many times before. He intentionally slows his motions and brings with him a mood of receptivity.

> Although it is a short path in the ravine I walk very slowly. I am attracted to the smallest thing. I see beauty in the dry and withered branch lying there . . .

He takes time to allow peace to enter. Oriented toward becoming more peaceful, he seeks a recurring experience by entering his sanctuary in a special way, prepared to receive what awaits him once he "walks in."

In seeking peace it is possible to create an environment that is conducive to the experience. For example, one focus group participant indicated that she and her husband have created a relaxation area in their home which includes a jacuzzi, candles, incense and music. Of the area, she commented that it is "our peace room." Other group members who were listening to her comments, followed with statements of how they used peaceful colors in decorating their home or kept objects, that represented personal peace, within close proximity.

There is extensive literature pertaining to making peace a goal and the subsequent attainment of personal peace through specified actions or non-actions. Many of the viewpoints in this regard have been reviewed in chapter two of this document (Review of Literature on Peacefulness and Related Concepts). For example, Thich Nhat Hanh (1991) in his book, *Peace is Every Step*, encourages mindfulness meditation as part of the process of becoming peaceful. Though this author speaks of peace as an important goal he reminds us that peace is in every step along the way, therefore peace is also the 'process'.

The possibility of earning some peace in life has been exemplified in the participant examples above. It would appear that there are things we can do that may affect acquisition of peace. We can work our way through good living practice, like stepping stones and in the end and in the process peace may come. The practicality of peace is seen in that it is like the fruit of our labour but it is also found in the gathering. Peace may be the goal, the path or the outcome when our actions move us in peaceful directions.

Chapter Summary

Chapter five was divided into three main sections, The Sensual Dimension of Peace, The Illusive Dimension of Peace and The Practical Dimension of Peace. Peace is experienced through the form of the body. Participants have reported a heightened sensory awareness in times of peace.

A peaceful feeling has been identified as something powerful sweeping through the body, as weightlessness and lightness, as freedom and as a warm feeling. At times a near tangible experience with an unseen or spiritual world has been reported. Transcendence of mortal constraints has also been noted by participants who indicated that bodily boundaries seem to disappear when at peace. A possible biological connection to peace has been suggested and it may be that rhythms of peace are natural to the physical body just as they are natural to the body experiencing peace in everyday life.

Peace as illusion was discussed. The effects of transience and temporality contribute to the experience of peace as illusion. Because of the impermanence of the peaceful state it is as though peace is just out of grasp. The experience of timelessness or of the eternal moment, and of peace as heavenly or magic, may result in a sense that peace is not *real* life. Yet participants in this study were able to recall and describe moments of peace with the utmost clarity and to identify great substance to the experience. Unrealistic expectations of life and naive interpretations of peace as encompassing only happiness, may be creating the illusion of peace as illusion. Perhaps a more lasting peace involves acceptance of its terminal nature. Perceptions of what is meant by a peaceful life may be relevant to experiences of peacefulness as reality rather than as illusion.

Though seemingly illusive, there is a practical side to peace. In addition to the inherent rejuvenating power of peace which exemplifies its practical nature, the peace of 'doing' was discussed from the perspectives of the peace of giving, the peace of accomplishment and peace as the goal. Though peace may enter of its own volition in an unexpected manner, participants of this study have noted that it is possible to engage in actions that are peaceful in process and in outcome. It is hopeful to recognize that we have the choice to 'move' in peaceful directions, to find the space where anything can happen, where peace can enter to soothe or heal or simply to remind us that life is beautiful.

CHAPTER SIX

PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF FINDINGS

This study has identified six more invariant themes of peacefulness. In addition, three dimensions of peacefulness which are more variant or incidental have been discussed for enhancement of meanings of peace. Peaceful moment stories, objects as symbols of peace, and individual and group interviews have provided a rich source of data for exploration of the phenomenon of peace. The intent of this chapter is to bridge the gap between thought and action, between lived peace and living peace. How can the insights gleaned from this study be applied in a practical way? This chapter encompasses a therapeutic look at the themes of peacefulness, recommendations for clinical practice, observations of participant response, future research directions and closure.

A Therapeutic Look at the Themes of Peace

The notion of doing 'peacework' is relevant in counselling. Rediscovering inner balance, resolution of conflict, reaching an inner accord, finding energy to go on, learning to live in harmony with others, knowing when to let go, seeing life's promise, finding meaning and purpose in life, and centering on wellness are focal points in a therapeutic encounter. These desired outcomes resonate with certain dimensions of the meaning of peacefulness: Rhythm of Accord, Promise in Peace, Sweet Surrender in Peace, Inner Rejuvenation, Kinship in Peace and Window to Eternity. The themes of peace offer guiding tenants for development of therapeutic strategies and peacefilled understandings.

Understanding the meanings that people have attached to experiences of peacefulness is relevant to doing good 'peacework'. To begin, I offer a summary that is different from the descriptive analysis of chapter four in that my researcher voice quiets and my therapist voice gains momentum. The varieties of applications are as numerous as the individuals who wish to employ them. The following represents a therapeutic look at the six themes of personal peace and contains practical messages for how to live peaceful lives.

Rhythm of Accord

Peace contains a rhythm as it moves through all aspects of life. As therapists we listen carefully for the rhythm of our client's lives hoping to hear what is below the surface. Is there harmony and balance? Or do the scales tip in favour of the negative aspects in a life story? This negatively weighted focus has been identified in clinical populations such as in cases of persons with depression where polarized thinking, overgeneralization, catastrophizing and selective thinking have been noted (Beck, 1991).

From the perspective of counsellor, promoting personal peace would involve strategies aimed at the development of living practices that honor all aspects of experience. In the case of persons with negative cognitions, facilitating a re-focus on life's kinder moments, such as moments of peace, would be a peace-enhancing intervention. Strategies that promote holistic apprehension of life and acceptance of life's fluctuations would be compatible with the Rhythm of Accord dimension of personal peace. As James (1985) reminds us:

> *The world is a double-storied mystery. Peace cannot be reached by simple addition of pluses and elimination of minuses from life* (p. 139).

The capacity to peacefully live in a world that is both good and evil is, in large measure, affected by one's attitude towards good and evil, according to James (1985). Cultivating healthy-mindedness or conceiving of things in a positive way is, at least in part, a matter of one's own thoughts about things. This is reminiscent of existential philosophy which espouses our own capacity to make choices in life and thus "create" our world through free will, though, with James, there is a strong component of relinquishment of power as well, through religious beliefs and mysticism. The degrees of freedom vary with the individual belief system but the active role of individual perception, interpretation and assignment of meaning lies at the heart of personal agency. Similar views are held by Frankl (1959), Jampolsky (1993), May (1983) and Rogers (1961). From this perspective we can choose peace to a greater or lesser extent or perhaps, more correctly, we can engage in thought processes and actions which are more apt to bring us to our peaceful place within.

The results of this study suggest that the motion of peace is in accord with the rhythm of life itself; it flows through darker moments just as it flows through lighter times. With this understanding, as counsellors, we can help our clients to become more peaceful by promoting reasonable expectations, facilitating the capacity to see the bigger picture, by encouraging acceptance of the natural rhythms of life (owning all aspects of experience) and, in metaphoric terms, by encouraging a willingness to "go with the flow."

Promise in Peace

The findings of this study suggest that persons at peace have accepted a promise that things will be Okay. Some of the participant experiences of peace were characterized by an unshakable sense of safety which transcended concerns for physical well-being. Words such as, "*It will be okay no matter what*," appeared in participant stories of peaceful moments and exemplified the power of the promise in peace. Though the words appear to be future oriented, in accepting the promise, the experience was that all was well in the present moment.

From a practical perspective it is significant to take good note of the words that transformed moments of peace*lessness* into experiences of peace. The words, "It will be Okay," are likely familiar because they are often spoken by caring parents to their children, as they lay secure foundations for growth. For some of us, the words may be so common that they are taken for granted.

They are like seeds of peace carefully planted within us. They can grow and become a bouquet of peaceful moments if we nurture and care for them. For others the words, and the experiences that they represent, are strangers, distant and unknown. As Maslow identified, safety is a basic need and until this is satisfied higher needs, or 'being' needs, will be overridden by lower deficiency needs (Maslow, 1971). From his perspective, without a sense of safety it would be difficult to be at peace.

I am reminded of the countless children that I have met in my practice who are seeking nothing more than some reassurance that "it will all be Okay." It is only when they have accepted the words as personally meaningful that their manifestations of peace*lessness* subside into something like peace or, for those who live with chronic uncertainty, a lessening of agitation at best.

As therapists we can listen for the promise (or lack of promise) in the lives of our clients and help plant the seeds that they, themselves, can learn to care for. Therapists that attempt to provide corrective emotional experiences, especially for children, and that create a climate of love, safety and security in the counselling room, would, from the perspective of this study's findings, be engaged in peacework. The theme, Promise in Peace, emphasizes the importance of creating a safe and loving environment for ourselves and others where words of peace are easily given and received. "Hush now. It will be Okay."

Inner Rejuvenation

We listen for many things in the counselling room and sometimes we hear the words, "I can't go on." We may hear a person speak of how the everyday business of life has worn him or her down or understand how emotionally painful experiences and unsuccessful efforts to avoid them, have resulted in a sense that there is no *life* to life. Depleted of energy and the joy of life, a person may come for help.

Participants in this study noted that, in moments of peace, a sense of rejuvenation is experienced that allowed them to continue their lives in a full way. This is important information to share with others who are caught up in *doing* and have *no time* to simply be. The practical message in the theme is that moments of peace are not simply an indulgence, they are significant in allowing us to carry on with our lives in a full way. Just as our bodies need rest so our minds and spirits need replenishing. Although we cannot guarantee that we will create peace for ourselves, as indicated in chapter five (Practical Dimension of Peace), there are things that we can do (and not do) that increase our receptivity to the experience. As therapists, we can carry this message of peace to our clients and help them identify ways to allow the peaceful energy to enter. We might ask the questions, "What in your life do you find peaceful? What is depleting your energy"?

One peace-enhancing technique may simply be to notice the moment; to become more aware of 'living' each day. Mindfulness meditation strategies such as have been clinically utilized by Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994) and Thich Nhat Hanh (1991, 1997) focus on the present moment and promote awareness. These are like stepping stones in promoting peace because they increase capacity for the 'vision' and the sensual heightening which have been noted in times of peace. Eastern practices such as Qi Gong (pronounced chee) which "cultivate and purify your own Qi" (vital energy) are particularly aimed at attainment of peace and harmony in body mind and spirit (Aung, 1996, p. 6) .

Guided imagery techniques that involve sensory recruitment and invite peaceful images are examples of strategies that can create pockets of peace and replenish energy. Techniques which re-kindle memories of special moments and create a re-living of the experience are peace enhancing.

Centering on the experience of peace may result in consciousness of peace entering, encircling, washing over the body. As identified in this study, participants were able to "feel" the warm energy or the "soothing touch" of peace. As practitioners we can help our clients read the bodily signs of peace and counter the tendency to focus attention on the bodily signs of peace*lessness*.

This theme suggests that in order to be peaceful it is important to learn to rest in the moment, to stay there a while, to give ourselves permission to simply 'be' so that the power of peace can penetrate. Putting the message into practice may result in a new peacefilled story in the counselling room which uses words something like, "I can go on. I feel fully alive."

In a book entitled *Listening to the Littlest,* Ruth Reardon speaks through the voice of a child. Her message is applicable to the current discussion.

> *SOMETIMES . . .*
> *let's just blow bubbles,*
> *For no good reason,*
> *let's just blow bubbles.*
> *Laugh a little, watch them disappear,*
> *not even wonder where.*
> *Smile and touch the rainbow colors*
> *watch them float in air.*
> *No reason why-*
> *no goals-no structure.*
>
> *Sometimes*
> *let's just*
> *blow bubbles . . .*
> Ruth Reardon (not dated or paginated)

Sweet Surrender in Peace

This theme describes a sense of empowerment that is something like freedom, as burdens are relinquished. Participants noted peaceful experiences that involved a sense of handing over power and control, of being carried by something greater than themselves. Stories that exemplified the theme, Sweet Surrender, were characterized by a relinquishing of the need to act on one's own behalf and a *letting go* of that which seemed beyond personal power. Understanding that peaceful experience is related to a capacity to surrender power yet involves empowerment, as therapists we may look for signs of over or under control in our client population in order to facilitate movement in peaceful directions. For example, a parent may fail to accept the growing independence of an older child and attempt to control too much of the child's life. The desire to protect or to rescue another from what life may bring, can result in stress and conflict for all parties concerned. At some point there is a need to surrender some of the power, to understand that some things are "beyond our control." As therapists we may be helpful in defining reasonable limits and boundaries while working toward the empowerment that accompanies a sweet surrender in peace. Techniques that work with the unconscious, and side step the ego, such as hypnosis, story-telling, art therapy and metaphor may be helpful in reducing the need to act at a conscious level. Guided imagery can also be helpful as a person can imagine themselves *letting go* of a particular problem and, as in the case of one child that engaged in this activity, "watching it drift away on a cloud until it disappeared into the sky" (adapted from client progress notes).

As therapists we facilitate the sweet surrender aspect of peace by providing a safe environment for clients to "lay their burdens down." In doing so we work towards the trust that is important in surrendering of troubles to another. From stories of peaceful moments, such as *The Accident* (p. 85), we see that there are times when holding on tight is a manifestation of our will to survive and others when letting go is the key to our survival. Peace is about finding a good balance.

Kinship in Peace

Works of love are always works of peace.
Mother Teresa (in Vardey, 1995, p. 171)

Of all the themes of peace, Kinship In Peace is open to exercising personal agency in terms of acquiring peace in our lives. It clearly exemplifies the significance of regarding others as kin if personal peace is to be attained. As in any family circumstance, certain responsibilities exist in terms of treating others with love and compassion in order to be an active member. Spiritual leaders the world round like Mother Teresa (in Vardey 1995), Dalai Lama (1994) and Thich Nhat Hanh (1991, 1997) promote good deeds towards others as necessary along the path to peace. The emphasis is on giving as opposed to receiving. The peace of giving was identified by participants in this study (chapter five).

As therapists we listen for a sense of connection to other in our client stories. Therapies that facilitate a re-connection to other, from the perspective of this study, would be enhancing peace not only at a personal level but in a communal sense. For example, finding ways for a client to make peace with another (letter writing, acts of kindness, working with forgiveness, changing communication patterns) are strategies that can be employed within an individual or family counselling context. In narrative psychology, for example, family therapists may engage clients in a process of story-connecting which involves different family members telling stories around a similar event, thus demonstrating what the larger story may be like from a variety of different perspectives (Epston and White, 1992).

Self worth is intimately tied up with our good deeds toward others and as has been indicated by participants in this study, a sense of feeling worthy is involved in being at peace. Caring acts begin at home and spin outward toward feeling at home in the world. Gadamer would likely refer to these as the activities or abilities of "good housekeeping" which are necessary if one is to have a "well-kept household" (Gadamer, 1996).

> *These not only encompass myself and my own activities but also include the house as a whole. The house is what is held in common, it is both the familiar practices and the dwelling place where people are at home together. This is not something we need to learn all over again. It is something we all know, but we have forgotten its paradigmatic importance and to that extent need to remember it once more* (p. 80).

A feeling of belonging is integral to a sense of being at home, whether this is in our immediate residence or the world as our abode. Techniques that develop a sense of one's own history and culture are peace-enhancing in that they can facilitate a legacy of commonality and thus of belonging. Though therapies help clients to identify their unique identities and promote *self*-development, results of this study underscore the importance of identifying what is held in common (how we are the same) and thus promoting a sense of kinship. People who believe that they are more similar than different from others, who are able to identify an affinity and say, "I can relate to that," are better able to feel for others. They are less likely to be 'at war' with others. They are free to love and be loved which, from the findings of this study, is essential to peaceful existence.

With reference to other themes mentioned, in the acceptance of the promise in peace and its accordant rhythm, the peaceful person does not shun intimacy with others knowing pain and joy are vital to life. Reaching out to others, if done in peace, can prove to be energizing rather than sapping of strength, in consideration of the inner rejuvenating power of peace. Therapists can encourage activities that deflect focus from self and re-focus on other. This can help reduce a victim-stance which is frequently noted in therapeutic encounters.

Mother Teresa (cited in Vardey, 1995) is an example of compassion in action, of tireless giving and of the peace attained through kinship. She does not suggest that we have to be martyrs or make the headlines with our heroics, but rather that, to be at peace, we can do small things with great love. This message is compatible with the findings of this study that emphasize a loving connection to self, other, and to a larger whole (or spiritual connection) as significant to being at peace.

In this study, individuals at peace felt a spiritual connection with nature, with a higher power. This emphasizes the importance of exploring all relational realms in a therapeutic encounter. For some a walk in the woods or a visit to a chapel may prove to be very effective "peace therapies".

Doing peace work covers a wide variety of activities. The most basic kind of peacework is smiling according to Thich Nhat Hanh because we spread good will in this way (1991, 1997). This study suggests that promoting personal peace involves encouraging loving acts towards others as well as towards ourselves. The importance of 'family' and 'home' is emphasized as integral to the peace experience.

> *This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.*
>
> (Jesus: John 15: 12)

Window to Eternity

The theme, Window to Eternity, describes a dimension of peace that is like an opening, a place of 'clear vision'. Participants in this study have identified moments in there life when they felt as though they were present to 'perfection', where they escaped the dictates of time and where they felt they were in direct contact with truth and meaning. For some, there was a sense of 'other-worldness' to the experience and of being close to the mystery of existence. This is a transcendent experience which involves reaching beyond 'normal' bounds. In this way it is a moment filled with hope because it brings us to our potential for transcending everyday problems.

Therapies that are committed to a full spectrum view of human growth and development such as in transpersonal psychology would be well suited to exploration of states that move beyond the ordinary. Wilber (1995) identifies a full spectrum approach as "encompassing instinctual to egoic to spiritual modes" (p. 127). Therapies that work toward achievement of optimal human potential and that recognize the significance of transcendent experience would be compatible with this aspect of personal peace. Maslow (1971) provides a framework for work in this area.

Therapeutically, peaceful moments, if consciously recruited from memory, can help define personal meaning. Therapists can assist clients to focus on peaceful times and can help queue peaceful memories. Participants described experiences of being in touch with what was personally meaningful in times of peace and found that solutions to everyday problems were forthcoming. Therapists can promote peace by facilitating the development of self-knowledge in relation to meaning and purpose. Logotherapy which is based on the work of Frankl (1978) is a series of therapeutic interventions that focus on finding meaning and purpose in life.

The findings of this study suggest peaceful times are like windows to truth and meaning. Moments of peace provide us with an opportunity to learn more about who we are, why we are, and what is personally important to us in our lives. Paying close attention to the message in the moment would likely teach us how to live better lives. From the perspective of therapist, the peaceful moment story, drawn from personal experiences of clients, provides an effective tool for promoting not only peace but the resolution that seems to rest in the moment. The findings of this study remind us to remain open to "the impossible" and as Wilber (1995) so eloquently put it, find in the upper reaches of the spectrum of consciousness:

> The mind of an eternal Spirit . . . a spirit that had always whispered lovingly in our ears: Never forget the true, and never forget the good, and never forget the beautiful (p. 129).

Synopsis of Thematic Applications

The themes of peacefulness described in this study are like stepping stones toward peaceful experience. In counselling they can act as guiding tenants for promotion of peaceful practices in the lives of our clients. As indicated in the preceding text, there are many existing therapies that are specifically oriented to attainment of the various identified dimensions of peace. It is my wish that the results of this research will prove helpful in the development of new and innovative practices and in the promotion of peace at a personal and professional level.

Researcher's Application of Findings in Counselling

The preceding commentary lays a foundation for venturing forward to do 'peacework'. In my practice as a psychologist I am incorporating the understandings derived from the themes of personal peace. In addition to specifically attempting new peace strategies based on the themes as guidelines, I have continued to use the specific data collection techniques (utilized in this study) as therapeutic tools.

Peaceful Moment Story Exercise

Briefly, peaceful moment stories are frequently written, told or portrayed in art form, in the counselling room where I meet with both adults and children. The exercise is well received and appears to be particularly successful in re-focussing clients away from hopelessness and fear. One young client, age fourteen years, engaged in a series of peaceful moment stories, writing several from her early childhood up to present day. Because of the significance of her peaceful moment story in revealing a return to health, I requested (and was granted) permission to tell her story as an example of the effectiveness of the peaceful moment as a therapeutic tool.

This young girl (whom I refer to as Kim) was brought to therapy by her mother. Kim had just disclosed to her mother that she had been sexually victimized by her stepfather since the age of nine years. After several months in therapy and following the family's safe relocation with police protection, Kim was introduced to the peaceful moment exercise using imagery techniques followed by story-writing and drawings of her images. Her capacity to use her imagination was well developed from years of dissociative practice which she used as a defence against sexual abuse. In addition, as an athlete, Kim had developed practices of mental focus.

Kim's peaceful images were rich with detail and told her story well. She easily recruited images of peaceful moments between the ages of five and nine years of age in which she spoke of family health and happiness. She was unable to recall a single moment of peace between age nine and fourteen years during which time she was being victimized. Of interest she was able to recall moments of pride and of happiness during this time, but none of peace. After six months of therapy she reported that she had once again experienced a peaceful moment. The following is the final peaceful moment story that she told prior to closure of therapy:

> Two nights ago I was having a sleep over at Nancy's house. It was a very warm summer night and we decided to stay up late and then we set up our pillows and blankets on the balcony of her family's house where we slept for the night. In the morning it was sunny but the air was cool. I remember feeling relaxed, sleepy, dozy because I had just woken up. In the distance I heard music playing from somewhere. I was all wrapped up in my blankets and when I rolled over and looked toward the sky I saw two white birds fly over me. They were like doves. I knew that this was a sign of love and peace sent to me. I knew, then,

> that everything is going to be Okay. I took a deep breath, then everything *was* Okay. It was the most peaceful moment . . . like I was in a movie with music and all. Somebody is watching over me . . . maybe its my great grandpa . . . I don't know.
>
> I wanted to shake my friend and jump all over I felt so excited. Even though there was a cool breeze blowing I felt very warm inside. This feeling affected me all day. I felt as though I had nothing to worry about anymore. It was like a turning point. The feeling is still there. It's still a good feeling inside but its not as intense as it was in that moment.

Kim's moment of peace was a strong indication of her healing process.

Symbols of Peace Exercise

The symbols of peace exercise has been described in chapter three of this document. Participants were asked to gather personal objects of peace and bring these to group for discussion. As though touching peace itself, members held their peace object while answering the question, "In what way does this object represent your peace"?

The use of a tangible representatives of peace served as a link to the peace experience. The suggestion was made that surrounding oneself with meaningful images and objects could promote peace. The symbols of peace exercise can be therapeutically effective with groups or individuals. Peace projects, such as collages comprised of peace symbols have been utilized by myself with children and teenagers as a variation of the symbols of peace exercise.

Peacework in Health Care

In addition to having therapeutic value in counselling, peacework has an important place within the medical field. For example, currently peacework is being introduced to chronically ill patients within a hospital setting. The goal is to shift the focus to the health within the person by recruiting peaceful moment memories and other health-filled experiences. The relevance of peacework to health professions is significant in consideration of the close relationship between physical and emotional health. The field of psychoneuroimmunology and other areas of mind-body research support the strong need for a holistic approach to health (Erikson, 1986; Goldberger and Breznitz, 1993; Levitan, 1987; Rossi, 1991, 1996; Sheikh, 1984).

Participant Experience of Involvement in the Study

For many participants involvement in the study appeared to be a meaningful experience. Exercises utilized for data collection seemed to offer a secondary therapeutic gain. Though focussing on life's peaceful moments could, intuitively, promote well-being, I didn't expect the tears or the intensity which accompanied storytelling. The group experiences were particularly revealing in this way as the writing process and storytelling was observable. For many participants, focussing on the stories was an emotional experience, one which appeared to hold great import. Details of peaceful moments were held in the memory for many years in some cases. Often stories contained images of what was most valued in life. This supports the earlier observation that the moment is a useful therapeutic tool in helping to define personal meaning.

Participants have made many comments which suggest that the simple exercise of writing or telling, in detail, the stories of peaceful moments provided them with important information. For example, several persons were surprised to find that they had reached a fair distance into their past to arrive at a moment of peace. One woman's comment is characteristic of this type of response:

> Finding a moment of real peace took me back in time farther than I would have liked. This was a good signal for me.

One man was saddened by the experience:

> Peace doesn't happen too much in my life. Yet it is always the one thing I most want . . . and need. It (peace) needs to become more a part of my life.

Focussing on peaceful moments resulted in an increase in the frequency of peaceful moments for some (or at least heightened awareness of the beauty in their own lives). Members of the focus group discussed the experience of both sharing the moments with others and independently writing about peace.

> It's certainly nice to write it down . . . that in itself is peaceful.

Speaking in the focus group one woman continued:

> We just don't take the time to think about it and to realize that there is some peace in our lives.

Another woman tells the group:

> This experience has been valuable to me because it prompts other peaceful moments. As I was writing this (peaceful moment story), I thought of another peaceful moment that I had experienced more recently. They seem to be right there for me.

The experience of recalling a peaceful moment was easier for some than others. For example one woman commented:

> I get a lot of peace looking at a lot of things. It doesn't take much to turn me on like when I see snow sparkling or our old birdhouse . . .

> when I see a baby sleeping and when I look at all 26 of us (children and grandchildren) . . . I get a real sense of joy and peace.

Another middle-aged woman said that she could only recall one moment of peace in her life which occurred 15 years ago. She indicated that, finding a moment of peace to write about, was the most difficult part of the exercise. She did however write a detailed account of one moment and commented of the experience:

> It brought back the moment. I felt the peace that I experienced once again from the time it took place and that was a long time ago. It made me reflect and I thought of a couple more moments of peace in my life.

She happily informed the group:

> There *are* more (experiences of peace) than just one.

With awareness that one has experienced cherished moments in life, can come a sense of gratitude as opposed to victimization. As one woman commented during a moment of peace:

> I can feel grateful for the beauty around me; for everything.

One woman, who had been suffering from a life-threatening illness, felt compelled to change her life and therefore sought peace by becoming a participant in the focus group:

> I've had a lot of health problems in the last year and a lot of it is stress related, not finding peace, running around like a chicken with its head cut off. I have to find some (peace) or it's going to do me in. Bottom line . . . calm it down . . . tone it down . . . figure out what is important . . . then make small changes . . . small but important. I thought that hearing about what others' experiences of peace are, I might learn how.

She was not the only participant who hoped to improve access to peace by engaging in the research exercises or who discovered a growing edge by participating. Focussing on peace through personal experiences created the knowledge that the phenomenon rests safely inside, is accessible and can be attained once again. This is a very hopeful message to convey in a counselling room. Raising consciousness also prompted personal questioning about current lifestyles or lack of peace in a life. In this way it promoted self-reflection which can lead to insight and peaceful changes.

In the group milieu, participants were able to hear others' stories of peace thereby considering new ways of looking at their own lives and new ways of working toward peace. From the response of participants in this study who were part of the group component, peaceful moment story-connecting in groups would be an effective therapeutic intervention.

Participant comments and research observations suggest that focussing on personal peace experience is therapeutic. This is compatible with clinical practice that adopts a health orientation and centers on identifying *what is right* in a life as opposed to what is wrong as Thich Nhat Hanh (1991, 1997) recommends. Recruiting positive experience is an empowering approach because it orients the client toward his or her own inner resources rather than creating a dependency on professional intervention. Because it is easier to make note of difficult times rather than times when all is in harmony, conscious focus may be necessary in promoting a waking up to peaceful moments. As Gadamer (1996) suggests:

> *Let us try to identify those contrasting experiences in which what is normally hidden actually shows itself* (p. 90).

The Unanswered Questions; Future Research Directions

The study of peacefulness has the potential of becoming a flourishing topic for future exploration. There are many narratives of peace awaiting future focus.

What does a child know of peace, an infant, a teenager? Are age and peace related? Years of life may ripen the experience yet I have known of the tortured old as I have the troubled young. When I look in the eyes of a baby I do not know if it is my reflection of peace I see or a peace that rests within the child. Indeed it is easier to know peace for what it is when the wizened old man speaks of it. Does a fruit not grow sweeter as it grows on the vine? Yet there is a sweetness in its earliest blossom.

What is the process of a peaceful person? Could exemplars of peace show us the way? How does peace grow or does it? Is there such a thing as a peaceful personality? What is the role of genetics in being at peace? Is the experience of peace the same for a man as it is for a woman? How is peacefulness experienced in different cultures?

What is the relationship between peace and knowledge? Participants in this study described experiencing peace as a moment of truth whereby much was learned in a direct kind of way. In a moment that is free of the dissonance it would appear that we can be moved to higher levels of understanding; much can be 'learned' in a peaceful moment. The related question could be asked: "What is the relationship between peaceful states and growth and change?

What are the obstacles to peace in today's world? What do we need to change in order to have more peace? Have we been seeking peace in all the wrong places? I am humbled by what remains 'undone' yet I can 'sweetly surrender' the 'doing' to another researcher at some future time. This in itself is peaceful.

Peace at Last

My eyes were large and ambitions great when I opened a new file on my computer named, 'Chapter One, An Introduction To Peacefulness'. I carefully placed the file in the grand folder called 'Peace', held my breath and began my search for peaceful experience. I had a vision. Today, more than two years later, I breathe out. A kind of sigh comes forth.

I review the contents of the introductory chapter and though I have addressed many questions, there is one remaining question which takes me back to all the others. It is the question that brings a researcher to evaluate her or his own efforts as they come to a close. What have I answered? What more is known because of my having researched as I did?

The phenomenon of peacefulness, in all its multiplicity, its splendor, its awe, its mystery, its life-giving vitality and its breath-taking significance, truly escapes 'knowing' what it is. An answer is far too definitive. It was not answers but rather understanding that was being sought. The recognition that one cannot really 'know' personal peace, as to define it or harness it for capture, is one more piece of information about its nature. The various arms of peace that embrace its totality have been presented in this document in the form of six more invariant themes. They are presently the limits of its definition. The language of the heart, or the soul, lies in the silence, the spaces between the words, the place between the tension of asking the question and answering it.

I look back upon the questions that I asked in the introductory chapter some time ago as I poised to build a document around them. What is the meaning of peacefulness? What exists in a moment of peace when the *'busyness'* of life subsides and the pain dissipates? What rests in the interlude? Is it something or is it nothing? What does the world look like through peaceful eyes and if I see it all how can I be at peace? Must I close my eyes to the pain around me? How do I go about living peacefully? Where do I find the script?

I can ask the questions once again knowing that they have enjoyed considerable focus and discussion over the preceding pages. There is deep satisfaction in recognizing that light has been shed on the questions that I asked. I think of the six more invariant themes that have been identified and the three more variant themes that enhanced the description of the phenomenon. Like arms, they contribute to a collective signification of peacefulness. A moment of peace represents a concentrated unit of a much larger picture. In this study, as in a lifetime, a collection of moments join to present a unified picture of peacefulness. The themes, like the moments in a life, flow together, touching one another and becoming one as it all falls into place.

All I really want is some peace in my life. This is how it all began. This is the statement that appeared in the advertisements for research participants and brought many as contributors. Personal peace found its stronghold in first person stories which invited visits to peaceful places. Storytellers distinguished a particular experience as being a peaceful one and recalled moments of peace as though they were there for the first time, re-experiencing the experience.

For myself, in studying peace, I listened for the peace of others and joined in their experience. I rested in my own peaceful interludes as I engaged in this study. I experienced the inner rejuvenation of peace with its healing pulse on many occasions when my energy became depleted. I could hear the promise in peace whispering, "Its Okay . . . you *can* go on." I felt the promise in peace . . . the promise that I would realize my goal, put form to the mist of my vision.

Today, at this moment, the written form of this document represents peace to me. Tomorrow peace may appear in some other form but I am open to that understanding. Today I am at peace with my study. I believe I have safely arrived at the 'place' where it all meets. As though at the center of an embrace, as though feeling the handshake, I step into the magic circle of peace. Here it is Okay to put down my pen and to feel the warmth of completion flowing through my body. In this moment there is a satisfaction deep in my soul. I might stay here a while.

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